Public discourses on sanitation and the urban poor in Accra, Ghana

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ABSTRACT

Accra is a rapidly developing city, where urban planning and provision of public services has not kept up with demand. The city struggles with poor sanitation, where often uncollected refuse blocks open storm and wastewater drains, and the majority of people do not have pipe water or access to safe toilet facilities. Access to sanitation services are a basic human right, but for the urban poor, who live in densely populated, under-served urban settlements, these rights are not being realised. This study focuses on urban poverty and sanitation in Accra, by exploring public discourses around these issues. It is particularly focused on discourses related to a major disaster event which occurred on June 3rd, 2015, where mass flooding and a fire caused in part by drain blockages in Accra, resulted in about 150 deaths.

This study has used a rights-based framework in analysing newspaper articles covering sanitation during the disaster aftermath and following years. This study found that there were dominating discourses of responsibility and blame with authorities emphasising Accra residents' personal responsibly for sanitation. These results were brought into a context of understanding how these discourses and the inaction on improving the sanitation situation have affected the urban poor. Poor sanitation access is a consequence of urban poverty. This research shows Accra has a long way to go in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals related to urban poverty.

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ACRONYMS

AMA	Accra Metropolitan Assembly
CLGF	Commonwealth Local Government Forum
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NPP	New Patriotic Party
GAMA	Greater Accra Metropolitan Assembly
GAMA SWP	Greater Accra Metropolitan Area Sanitation and Water Project
GDP	Gross Domestic Production
GHS	Ghana Cedi
GOIL	Ghana Oil Company Limited
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICESCR	The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
RBAs	Rights Based Approaches
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UN HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WHO	World Health Organisation

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCING THE PUBLIC DISCOURSES ON SANITATION AND THE URBAN POOR IN ACCRA, GHANA

1.1 Introduction: "Apocalypse in Accra": The June 3rd disaster

From June 1st until June 3rd, 2015, heavy rain crippled Accra, the sprawling capital city of Ghana in West Africa where urban development and sanitation service provision have not kept up with population demands. Residents in Accra contend with a flawed drainage system, poor development controls, limited refuse collection and limited access to safe toilet facilities (Owusu, 2010; Peprah et al., 2015; Rain, Engstrom and Antos, 2011; Songsore, 2017). Across Accra, about 26% of solid waste remains uncollected, ending up "in drains, vacant lots, streets and beaches, or is burnt by residents" (Oduro-Appiah et al., 2017, p.1154).

In those first days of June, 2015 residents across the city faced severe, widespread flooding (see figure 1.1; "Torrential rain," 2015). Open drains that run alongside roads were blocked with refuse, which contributed to them overflowing onto the streets (Dadzie, 2015; Government of Ghana, 2015). Locally known as 'Circle', the Kwame Nkrumah Circle, a major business area and transport hub became a disaster zone late into the night on June 3rd. Circle is next to the Odaw River, which drainage systems in Accra run into. The river had overflowed, as did the uncovered storm and wastewater drains in the area, causing severe flooding (Alve, 2015; "Apocalypse in," 2015; Dadzie, 2015). Dozens of people who were in the Circle area sought shelter from the floods under the state-owned Ghana Oil Company Limited (GOIL) gas station's awnings or in vehicles in the station's forecourt. Many were low-wage workers trying to find transport to get home. However, people soon smelt gasoline (Bigg and Kpodo, 2015).

At about 9pm fire broke out nearby and spread to the fuel station through the floodwaters. The fire happened quickly with no opportunity to escape, a fire brigade spokesman said in the aftermath (Bigg and Kpodo 2015). Media reported the unfolding disaster, but it was not until

the following morning, they reported the full extent and rising death toll (Alve, 2015; "Apocalypse in," 2015; Baiocchi, 2015; figure 1.2). Ghana's President John Dramani Mahama stated around 150 people had died, making it the worst disaster to hit Ghana in more than a decade (Bigg and Kpodo 2015).

This research report uses this June 3rd 2015 disaster[1] as a starting point and aims to explore public discourses around sanitation in Accra and how these discourses affect the urban poor. This research aim is because in the days following the disaster, authorities started to speak about the state of sanitation in Accra, especially the personal sanitation practices of residents as contributing to the disaster. For example, the day after the disaster, President Mahama pointed to people building on the city's waterways, which blocked drainage systems, and dropping refuse into the city's open drains as causing flooding in the city (Bigg and Kpodo 2015; "We'll implement", 2015). Days after the disaster, authorities started demolition exercises in poor areas of Accra attributed to causing flooding. These poor areas often lacked access to adequate sanitation services (Human Rights Council, 2018; Oteng-Ababio and Arguello, 2014; Owusu, 2010). Drains were cleaned, unauthorised buildings were demolished, and people were evicted, while the mayor condemned dumping of refuse into the drains (Issah, 2015a; "Massive demolishing", 2015).

A government-commissioned report about the disaster undertaken in June 2015 found the flooding was caused by the rain and the inadequate, blocked drainage channels (Government of Ghana, 2015). The government report found part of the Odaw had been reclaimed by an informal settlement, called Old Fadama, and the disaster area had unregulated buildings and structures in waterways, which had trapped floodwaters. The report also said urban migration was an indirect cause of the disaster, because a lack of affordable housing and increasing urbanisation created informal settlements along the Odaw, leading to the uncontrolled dumping of waste and informal buildings on or near waterways. The fuel station caught fire because it was flooded and fuel seeped out from underground storage and floated on the floodwaters. A person dropping a lit cigarette was made responsible for the fire, and the report recommended better design and construction of underground storage and better safety practices at fuel stations and engineering solutions to mitigate future flooding. While the government report said these different factors were prominent in causing or contributing to

[1] This disaster will be referred to as June 3rd in this report, to reflect how it is referred to colloquially in Ghana

the disaster, the report placed sanitation as a key issue, especially due to Accra's usual high levels of refuse in the drains, which caused blockages. This report called for an "aggressive waste management programme" (Government of Ghana, 2015 p. xii), including free bins to households in Accra. The government report suggested sanitation in the city was due to an "attitudinal problem" (Government of Ghana, 2015 p. xii), more so than financial issues and called for education, enforcement of sanitation regulations and prosecution in sanitation courts.

In the years since the disaster, sanitation has remained a topical issue in Accra. Using principles from critical discourse analysis, this research report explores public discourses about the disaster and sanitation in the following years, as presented in Ghana's most popular newspaper, *The Daily Graphic*, and analyses public texts from local government. This research also relies on semi-structured interviews with a pro-poor NGO, a local government official and with the urban poor in Accra to understand experiences in accessing sanitation services, which will be explained in full in Chapter Four.

This chapter sets out the context for this research report. The following section offers my research rationale, followed by an explanation of the context of Ghana and its economic and political history, followed by the research questions and objectives and the outline of this research report.

Figure 1.1 Photo of a transport hub in Accra after heavy rain in early June 2015. Photo published as a part of a series by the *Daily Graphic* showing the destruction from the June 1-3 flooding and the fire disaster. *Credit: Daily Graphic Online*, from Accra: Deaths And Destruction Follow Floods. *Source:* http://photos.graphic.com.gh/Accra-Deaths-and-destruction-follow-floods/3

Figure 1.2: An image taken after the June 3rd, 2015 disaster in Accra showing the destruction of the GOIL Fuel Station. Credit: Daily Graphic. *Retrieved from:* http://photos.graphic.com.gh/Accra-Deaths-and-destruction-follow-floods/8

1.2 Research Rationale

I noticed Accra's sanitation issues when I moved to the city from New Zealand a few months after June 3rd and soon found the state of sanitation in this city a hot topic in public conversations, whether in local media or discussed in public transport. Working as a journalist in Ghana, in early 2018 I wrote a feature of the state of sanitation in Accra after Ghana's president pledged to make the capital the cleanest city in Africa under his leadership (Knott, 2018). This article led me to investigate how solid waste is dealt with in the capital. The findings in my article and my interest in human rights and urban development inspired my research.

My research report uses the term sanitation in the wider sense, looking at wider environmental sanitation, which is how the term sanitation is used in Ghana: referring to human excreta, waste management and drainage systems (Appiah-Effah et.al, 2019; Government of Ghana, 2010; World Health Organisation [WHO], 2019). In other nations, and often in United Nations literature, sanitation refers to the disposal of human excreta. Access to safe water is often mentioned alongside sanitation in Ghana, so this research included a focus on access to water when explaining rights to services. This study outlines how both poor neighbourhoods and informal settlements generally lack adequate or safe access to essential sanitation services such as refuse collection, toilet facilities, and safe water provision. While local and central governments are responsible for ensuring access to these services, not everyone has access. Those who do not, rely on the informal sector or private sector services, or illegally dump rubbish and defecate in the open, this poor access is a reflection of urban poverty in Accra, which this report also examines.

This research has used a rights lens and explored the government as being duty-bound to provide sanitation services, as is reflected in local and international laws. This topic was also analysed against some key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): SDG 3 ensures healthy lives and promote well-being for all, at all ages, SDG 6 addresses the need for clean water and sanitation for all people, SDG 10 looks at reducing inequalities, and SDG 11 focuses on the need to create sustainable cities. To understand the relevance of rights in the context of the SDGs in Ghana, the following section presents an overview of Ghana's recent political and economic history.

1.3 Ghana: Democracy, Neoliberalism and Increasing Inequality

Ghana is an independent West African nation on the Atlantic coast bordered by Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso and Togo, with a landmass of 227,533 square kilometres of mostly low plains with a hot, tropical climate, humid in the south and dry in the north (CIA, 2019), with a population of about 29.6 million (World Bank, 2019). Since 1844 until independence in 1957, the British controlled the country, leaving behind a legacy of underdevelopment (Konadu-Agyemang, 2000). Ghana was the first Sub-Saharan country to gain independence in 1957 but in its early years of independence had multiple coups. However, since 1992 it has been a democratic, presidential republic under a multi-party system ruled by either the New Patriotic Party (NPP) or the National Democratic Congress (NDC) where presidents have a four-year term and can run twice. In 2015, when the flood and fire disaster happened, John Mahama was the president as the leader of the NDC. In December he was voted out, replaced by the NPP's Nana Dankwa Akufo-Addo who took office in 2016. Ghana is a collectivist society, which respects power distance and hierarchy, which also reflects perceptions that not all people in society are equal (Hofstede Insights, 2019). As it is a hierarchical society, elites (politicians, religious and traditional leaders) hold much power and sway (Hasty, 2016).

Central government ministries and parliament are all based in the capital Accra, and Ghana has local government with responsibilities enshrined in the constitution. Local government assemblies are tasked with setting and collecting local revenue and receive funding from the national budget and are responsible for public health, environmental protection and sanitation, while social welfare is a shared responsibility with central government (Commonwealth Local Government Forum [CLGF], 2018). However, Yeboah-Assiamah (2016) argued central government lacks political will to transfer power, authority and resources to the local assemblies which are not given enough autonomy or real power to initiate and execute their plans and policies (Yeboah-Assiamah, 2016). Oteng-Ababio and Arguello (2014) point to confusion over the roles and mandates between central and local government, especially finding discrepancies between assigned and actual responsibility for delivering services, which often means local government revenue does not cover expenses (Oteng-Ababio and Arguello, 2014).

Under a stable democracy, in recent years Ghana has been regarded for its economic growth - from 2010 to 2015, Ghana saw an average annual growth rate of 7.64% (Huq and Tribe, 2018, p.3). Growth is projected to be 7.6% in 2019 with a continued emphasis on growing the private sector and keeping inflation in the single digits (World Bank, 2019). Despite this economic growth, inequality has been on the rise and poverty is still prevalent in many areas (Cooke, Hague, and McKay, 2016). Ghana achieved the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 1 by halving its national poverty level between 1992 and 2013 (Cooke, Hague, and McKay, 2016). The country met other MDGs, including halving the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and offering universal primary education and gender parity in primary schools (Human Rights Council, 2018). However, the pace of poverty reduction has since slowed – the annual rate of reduction of the poverty level was on average 1.8 percentage points per year in the 1990s but has dropped to 1.1 percentage point per year reduction since 2006 (Cooke, Hague, and McKay, 2016, p.1). A poor income is defined as an annual income of less than 1,314 GHS per adult (80 US cents a day in April 2018), while the extreme poor live on less than 792 GHC annually per adult (48 US cents a day in April 2018) (Human Rights Council, 2018, p.5). Inequality is higher than it has ever been with 20% of the population living in poverty and one in 8 living in extreme poverty (Human Rights Council, 2018, p.5).

Widening inequality has been linked to Ghana undergoing a World Bank and the International Monetary Fund Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) brought about in 1983. Ghana faced an economic crisis and a failing economy, due to external factors like unfavourable international trade terms, and internal issues like severe drought (Donkor, 2018). Ghana took on a neoliberal agenda, relying on market forces rather than state controls – the SAP was meant to stabilise and liberalise the economy (Donkor, 2018). The SAP included massive cuts in social services, job losses in the public sector and privatisation of state-owned enterprises (Konadu-Agyemang, 2000). While these adjustments were credited with growing the GDP and dropping inflation, there were many adverse effects; in the 15 years after the SAP inequality increased because user-pay systems for health and education services were introduced (Konadu-Agyemang, 2000). Under this neoliberal agenda, and the state reneging on these social services, individuals became more responsible for these obligations, reflecting Conway's (2014) explanation that neoliberalism advocates for "changing perceptions of public and community good to individualism and individual responsibility" (p.107).

The vast majority of Ghana's workforce (90%) is in the informal sector (Government of Ghana, 2014, p.7) This is a sector characterised by low productivity, vulnerable workers and the working poor (people on 2 USD a day or less) (Government of Ghana, 2014, p.33). A large number of the population does not enjoy their fundamental economic and social human rights, which calls into doubt Ghana meetings many of the SDGs (Human Rights Council, 2018). This neoliberal direction and its effects on the poor in particular is reflected in the struggles the urban poor have in accessing adequate sanitation in Accra, where public services have been privatised or contracted out and are overburdened. A consequence of Accra's poor sanitation issues was the June 3rd, 2015 disaster. The research questions as presented in the next section sets out how the disaster works as a starting point to examine public discourses around sanitation issues in Accra.

1.4 Research Aims

This research report's overall aim is to explore public discourse around sanitation issues in Accra and how this affects Accra's poor. It has three research questions with objectives for each outlined below.

Research Question 1: *What public discourses on Accra's sanitation issues have taken place since the flood and fire disaster in June 2015?*

Objectives:

1.1 To analyse how the role of sanitation was presented after the June 3rd disaster.

1.2 To explore how sanitation issues were presented in Ghana's media.

1.3 To explore how sanitation issues were approached by local and national government.

Research Question 2: *How has public discourse on sanitation described Accra's poor since June 2015?*

Objectives:

2.1 To understand how the sanitation focused discourses have affected the city's poor through policy, actions, and directives.

2.2 Within these public discourses to analyse who is seen as responsible for the state of sanitation in Accra and the consequences of these perceptions.

Research Question 3: *Is Ghana's government upholding the right to sanitation?*

Objectives:

3. 1 To understand the challenges Accra faces in realising the right to sanitation.

3.2 To understand what particular urban development practices the government has put in place to address sanitation in recent years and the outcomes.

3. 3 To explore how Accra might achieve the SDGs related to sanitation and urban development.

1.5 Research Report Outline

This report will seek to answer these above questions as follows: the first chapter has outlined the context of this report and presented Ghana's political and economic history. It outlined some public discourses on sanitation in Accra and explained the rationale of this study. Chapter Two will outline the theoretical framework, where sanitation is framed as a human right, as outlined through national and international laws Ghana is a signatory to. However, this chapter will also explain the difficulties in applying human rights in Accra's urban development. Chapter Three gives an overview of Accra's sanitation issues, where waste management and sanitation services are largely privatised in Accra. Chapter Four explains the qualitative method, ethics process and my positionality in this research. Chapter Five is the data analysis chapter where articles are placed in the different discourses identified. Chapter Six will discuss the findings of this research.

CHAPTER TWO: RIGHTS AND THE URBAN POOR

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents this study's framework and will start by explaining urban development and urban poverty issues for developing nations, such as Ghana. It will then deliberate how the international community is addressing these issues, primarily through a rights lens.

Accra's sanitation issues reflect broader issues of urban poverty, which points to the need to respect and enforce the urban poor's rights. However, as this chapter will explain, rights in urban development are far from being realised globally, and sanitation in Accra is a good example of this lack. From within Ghana's laws, African Union treaties and through the United Nations which Ghana is a signatory to, people have the right to live in sanitary environments.

The right to sanitation can be interpreted through the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), through the right to an adequate standard of living (article 11) and the right to health (article 12), which includes improving environmental and industrial hygiene (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR], 1966). The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) highlighted states' responsibility in combating disease, providing clean drinking water and taking into consideration the dangers and risks of environmental pollution to children (OHCHR, 1989). The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 2002 declared water as a right and states were obligated to take measures to prevent, treat and control diseases linked to water, in particular ensuring access to adequate sanitation (ECOSOC, 2002). Futhermore, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 64/292, reinforced this right to sanitation in recognising public health and clean drinking water as essential to realising all human rights (UNGA, 2010).

Ghana is a signatory to the African Union's African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights which states all people have the right to a satisfactory environment favourable to their development (African Union, 1981). Further, article 18 of the Protocol to the African Charter On Human And Peoples' Rights On The Rights Of Women In Africa, states as part of the right to a healthy and sustainable environment, states shall take all appropriate measures to regulate the management, processing, storage and disposal of

domestic waste (African Union, 2003). Ghana's constitution does not mention the right to a healthy environment or sanitation but states that peoples' dignity cannot be violated. The constitution outlines the state is responsible for ensuring the realisation of basic human rights, including the right to good health, and to "take appropriate measures needed to protect and safeguard the national environment for posterity" (Parliament of the Republic of Ghana, 1996, art. 35). The constitution affirms that rights, duties, declarations and guarantees relating to the fundamental human rights and freedoms within it, does not mean other rights considered inherent to democracy are excluded.

The UN puts the obligation to realise rights in line with human rights principles, including universality, accountability and non-discrimination. However, as will be explained in this chapter, there is a conflict between human rights and development - human rights discourses advocate the immediate alleviation of deprivation, whereas development discourses advocate progressive realisation (Pogge and Sengupta, 2016).

Likewise, there are concerns about neoliberalism's role in development and in recent decades in rights in development, which this chapter will introduce. This chapter will end by outlining the development of the right to sanitation, especially as it is applied to the SDGs, which provides context for research question three on Ghana's government upholding the right to sanitation.

2.2 Urban Development and the Urban Poor

By 2030 all developing regions, including Africa, are expected to have more people living in urban than rural areas, with almost the total global population growth over the next 30 years concentrated in urban areas (UN-HABITAT, 2010). Without sustainable solutions, this growth will add pressure to already overburdened services and infrastructure. This section will outline issues poor people face in cities in developing nations like Ghana, and why it is essential to focus on their issues and see these as rights deprivations needing redress.

2.2.1 Introducing Urban Poverty

Cities in developing nations are often seen as engines of economic growth and development, but alongside the malls and highrise apartments are those who live in urban poverty, many having migrated from rural areas attracted by the opportunities cities represent (Rakodi, 2014). However, as Rakodi (2014) notes since the 1960s, waged work and formal housing and infrastructure in cities have not been able to keep up with population growth, which has led to informal sector growth. The informal sector is marked by informal settlements and self-provision or reliance on private sector services or illegally tapping into public services.

High levels of inequality are found in urban areas with large populations excluded from wealth and opportunities, which leads to a multitude of deprivations and poverty (Greif and Dodoo, 2015; Jorgenson and Rice 2016; UN-HABITAT, 2010). UN-HABITAT (2010) labels this inequality as a growing urban divide, where high economic and consumption disparities can result in social and political tensions (UN-HABITAT, 2010). Rakodi (2014) associated many of the urban poors' problems with the 1980s and 1990s SAPs, where the poor bore the brunt of economic reforms, as was the case for Ghana as outlined in the previous chapter. In recent decades, poverty has been viewed as a human rights issue, needing human-rights approaches to overcome deprivations associated with it, as the next section will explain.

2.2.2 Urban Poverty as a Human Rights Issue

Poverty is a multidimensional human rights issue, as a person lacks both income and the necessary capabilities to live in dignity. He or she might experience interrelated and mutually reinforcing deprivations, including unsafe housing, dangerous work conditions and limited access to health care - all are human rights violations (Appiagyei-Atua, 2008; Marks, 2017; OHCHR, 2012). Sen (2013) linked poverty and deprivation with a lack of freedoms; he advocated to alleviate suffering, development should focus on freedoms people have reason to value, like freedom from hunger, from illiteracy and to achieve dignity and respect. Focusing on just fulfilling basic needs would limit people from demanding more, for example when faced with hunger, education might be seen as a luxury over a need. He argued contentment was "generated by hopelessness and resignation, in the absence of the courage and freedom to consider alternatives" (Sen, 2013, p.11). Addressing the negative effects of poverty and ensuring sustainable development is in line with human rights principles have

become the core mandates of development today, especially in Agenda 2030. The purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations guide Agenda 2030, including advocating full respect for international law, Agenda 2030 is grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, international human rights treaties, and is informed by other instruments such as the Declaration on the Right to Development (United Nations, 2015). Further, the United Nations explained human rights were critical to achieving development and not a reward of it (Manzo, 2003). The right to sanitation is crucial for the urban poor's development, as will be explained later in this chapter, especially through the SDGs, which since 2015 have been the global focus of development.

2.3 Human Rights and Principles of Rights-Based Approaches for Urban Development

In developing nations like Ghana, rights in development are important when public systems are often overburdened or underfunded, and poverty and inequality limit peoples' access to essential services. To remedy this limited or lack of access to public goods and services, in recent decades there has been a focus on the concept of emphasising rights in development and advocating the principles of rights in carrying out development, under the Rights-Based Approaches (RBAs) frame. RBAs are the practical application of human rights in the development sector (Elliot, 2014). They are meant to transform rights as outlined by the United Nations, to enforced laws in the signatory nations throughout the world and using human rights principles to do so. A hallmark of RBAs is the commitment to protecting the rights of disadvantaged and vulnerable people who might experience discriminations, stigmatisation and deprivations; their human rights violations might be from the state, structural barriers or economic forces (Chapman and Carbonetti, 2011). RBAs to development started gaining traction with the 1986 UN declaration of development as a human right (UNGA, 2011). This declaration then influenced the development sector through the 1990s, especially in strengthening civil society and advocating for participation, a principle of RBAs, along with other human rights principles to inform the process of development (Elliot, 2014). While RBAs do not have one coherent narrative, they put values and politics at the centre of development, advocating for how things should be from a moral and ethical viewpoint, and have political and legal implications (Choondassery, 2017; Elliot,

2014). RBAs advocate the value and dignity of people and have come to underpin development framework such as the SDGs. These expand on and include longstanding global issues within rights lenses, for example, using a rights perspective to a clean and safe environment (Choondassery, 2017).

The basis of RBAs in development is the human rights principles of participation, accountability, equality and non-discrimination, transparency, and empowerment (Gready, 2008). A select few of these principles will be outlined below, focused on what they mean for urban development and their relevance to the SDGs, which as described above have a core focus in this research when describing rights for the urban poor in Accra.

2.3.1 Equality, Non-Discrimination and Universality

Regarding the SDGs, the motto "leave no one behind," points to recognition of the principles of equality and non-discrimination, while the SDGs commit to considering targets achieved only if they are met for all segments of a population (Pogge and Sengupta, 2016). This consideration is important for the urban poor in Accra who might be excluded from fundamental human rights, often due to economic forces. RBAs ensure the weakest have access to essential services while strengthening their awareness of their legal rights (Broberg and Sano, 2018). However, as Schuftan (2018) argues, despite this good intention, RBAs still marginalise people because even if rights are enshrined in law, rights-holders need access to courts to fight for them which is a barrier for the poor who then need to rely on civil society to act on their behalf. This could lead to a prioritising of rights. Sanitation, in particular, might not be considered as important in the urban space as the right to education or healthcare. Related to these principles is the principle of universality, which de Man (2019) critiques in regard to the SDGs, for dictating liberal and Western values. Although there is language on respecting national policy space in the SDGs, Pogge and Sengupta (2016) express concern over those nations that fail to reach the goals or targets being shamed and blamed when they generally lack the capacity to achieve them.

2.3.2 Empowerment

A defining principle and process of development within RBAs is confronting power structures and expanding democratic spaces and processes, in order to address the structural

causes of poverty, not just the symptoms (Gready, 2008). Challenging power structures make people aware of their legal rights, so rights-holders are empowered to go from being passive recipients to becoming active rights holders (Broberg and Sano, 2018). In the SDGs governments were empowered to set their national targets and how to incorporate them into national planning. However, there are criticisms citizens themselves are not empowered enough to demand development as a right, despite this being a core tenant of human rights and RBAs to development (de Man, 2019). Likewise, as described above, there are concerns nations which are not adequately supported - or empowered - to reach their goals or targets will be shamed and blamed for failures.

2.3.3 Accountability

Crucial to the RBAs is not just being empowered to claim the right but ensuring there is redress when a right is not realised. Traditionally law is a minor part in international development assistance. However, under RBAs law is used both in promoting legal rights and building capacity to realise them (Broberg and Sano, 2018), so citizens can hold their governments to account through international conventions and agreements (Cornwall and Nyamu-Musembi, 2004). States' failures to uphold rights has been linked to a failure in placing specific responsibilities on wealthy nations to assist poorer ones to realise these rights, which would be in line with Agenda 2030's commitment to realise the right to development - without specific task division and responsibilities attributed, goals will just remain wishes (Pogge and Sengupta, 2016). Again, not attributing specific responsibilities could lead to prioritising rights, and in the urban development space, issues like access to sanitation could remain on a wishlist, rather than investments and concrete actions in realising this.

2.4. The Challenges with RBAs

Aside from the above-described critiques in the RBAs and how they have been applied to the SDGs, there are concerns of RBAs delaying human rights realisations, and the infiltration of neoliberal agendas, which this following section will outline.

2.4.1 Progressive Realisation of Rights

Although there is a legal foundation for RBAs there are often issues with translating international commitments to national policy, because of financial constraints. Constraints lead to the progressive realisation of rights, which is allowed through the UN, there is a minimum obligation to use the maximum available resources to realise a right. Critics say progressive realisation allows rights to remain aspirational and in allowing gradual realisations, many people still suffer (Overseas Development Institute, 1999; Pogge and Sengupta, 2016). The ICESCR outlines flexibility in states' obligations towards the full realisation of rights but calls for improvements in access to goods and services over time (OHCHR, 1966). In the ICESCR there is an obligation to focus on vulnerable and disadvantaged groups to reduce structural inequality, and states should use their resources and those of the international community (Chenwi, 2013).

Pogge and Sengupta (2016) argued the SDGs do not reflect human rights principles in a large part due to the allowance of progressive realisation, and the ramifications of that, such as avoidable deaths caused by severe deprivations in the period during which a goal is being realised. Progressive realisation does not fit the language of rights, and the recognition that all human beings have the right to a life of dignity in which they can meet their basic needs (Pogge and Sengupta, 2016). As will be further explained below, global data has linked illnesses and deaths to poor sanitation in developing nations. Pogge and Sengupta (2016) argue progressive realisations can be interpreted that people will still be deprived and die while waiting for enforcement of these rights - which is counter to human rights language.

2.4.2 RBAs and Neoliberalism

As explained in Chapter One, Ghana went through a SAP, which reflected the global neoliberal agenda. Over the decades, the World Bank has not put much emphasis on human rights. In 1998 it stated human rights are a goal of development (The World Bank, 1998). Palacio (2006), a World Bank legal counsel, wrote the World Bank's role is to facilitate its members to realise their human rights obligations. However, human rights were not a basis for the Bank's conditionalities. In 2017 World Bank-financed projects were accused of violating human rights by a United Nations independent expert, who included mass evictions,

pollution and forced labour (OHCHR, 2017). Despite this, the World Bank has a history of using a rights language to push neoliberal agendas, for example, within SAPs regressive budgets were blamed, and corruption and the failure of governments to act responsively for the lack of access to public goods. To remedy this lack of access and to create development, the World Bank advocated citizens hold governments accountable and demand transparency with public good provisions (Onazi, 2013), which as explained above are principles of human rights and RBAs. However, as Manzo (2003) said, promoting RBAs within neoliberal agendas is a paradox: RBAs demanded greater accountability from states, but neoliberalism is responsible for weakening the capacity of states, democracy, and a state's authority. As will be explained in the next chapter, the neoliberal agenda in Ghana included cutting down on government spending, including waste management and privatising and franchising services. Reforms saw many governments workers lose their stable jobs and so move into the informal sector (Donkor, 2018). In the informal sector, there is often a lack of organisation, including a lack of advocating for rights (Owusu, 2010). This lack of advocacy could be because people are not as aware of their rights, or how to advocate for them - or they are too busy focusing on survival to go to court to fight for their rights.

2.5 The Right to Sanitation and the Sustainable Development Goals

As the introduction of this chapter outlined, the right to sanitation can be argued through Ghana's constitution, African Union treaties and through the United Nations which Ghana is a signatory to. The most recent basis for rights in development is through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Sanitation is one of the cross-cutting issues integrated into 12 out of the 17 SDGs (Agbefe, Lawson and Yirenya-Tawiah, 2019). Although not legally binding, the targets in the SDGs link to regional and international human rights Conventions and Covenants, which are binding and monitored at the global level (Dianova International, 2019). Ghana has repeatedly affirmed its commitment to the SDGs, especially President Akufo-Addo, who has served as a co-chair of the Secretary-General's SDGs Advocates (United Nations, 2017). In 2019 the President said he wanted to make Ghana a global example in successfully implementing all 17 SDGs ("SDGs implementation," 2019).

For this research the strongest links to sanitation for the urban poor are SDG 3 - Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages; SDG 6 - Ensure availability and

sustainable management of water and sanitation for all; SDG 10 - Reduce inequality within and among countries and SDG 11 - Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. These SDGs will be explained below, followed by an explanation over the issues that might hamper their achievement.

- *SDG 3 - Healthy Lives and Well-being for All:* SDG 3 aims to prevent early deaths, and epidemics like malaria and water-borne diseases (which are linked to poor sanitation). It aims to reduce deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination, which are a reflection on waste management (United Nations, 2015).

- *SDG 6 - Sanitation For All:* By 2030 there should be sustainable, adequate and equitable sanitation, water and hygiene access for all, including an end to open defecation. SDG 6 has an indicator of the proportion of the population using safely managed sanitation services. Target 6.3 calls for a reduction of dumping and pollution of water bodies, and increasing wastewater treatment (United Nations, 2015).

- *SDG 10 - Reduce Inequalities:* SDG 10 acknowledges severe wealth disparities hinder the achievement of access to rights and the need for social and economic inclusion and eliminating discriminatory laws and practice and for greater equality of outcomes (Oestreich, 2018). SDG 10 is important to Ghana's urban poor and their access to essential services, like sanitation, because inequality in Ghana is on the rise (Cooke, Hague, and McKay, 2016).

- *SDGs 11 - Inclusive Cities:* SDG 11 tackles the urban divide. In developing countries such as Ghana, when people leave their rural homes in search of prosperity in the cities, they will likely start their urban lives living in informal settlements, which likely lack necessary infrastructure and services (Rodic and Wilson, 2017). Target 11.1 is aimed at addressing this lack by upgrading slums and ensuring access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services (United Nations, 2015). Target 11.6 states the need to focus on municipal and other waste management, assessed by indicator 11.6.1, which will look at the proportion of urban solid waste

regularly collected and with adequate final discharge out of total urban solid waste generated by cities (United Nations, 2015).

2.5.1 Complexities in the SDGs and the Right to Sanitation

Meeting targets for the above four SDGs will be challenging. For SDG 6, challenges are around local governance issues. In the Global South, elected officials often oversee implementation of these targets, and might base their decision-making priorities on electoral incentives which could lead to rewarding favoured neighbourhoods with water or sanitation access, due to electoral support or reward political allies with sanitation sector roles rather than on merit (Herrera, 2019). In Ghana inefficiency and corruption often make government provision of public services unsustainable, for example, politicians who get into office using their position to recoup the money they spent on campaigning through kickbacks on state contracts and awarding state contracts to party members, as was found in water provision, which then brought mismanagement and instability into the sector (Hirvi and Whitfield, 2015). Additionally, there have been corruption and bribery allegations in awarded waste management contracts in Accra (Coleman, 2018; "Govt cancels," 2019).

In addition, economic, physical and institutional challenges hamper achieving the right to sanitation, including even getting access to a court to demand this right, as RBAs advocate (McGranahan, 2015). Ghana's legal system is slow, expensive and overburdened; civil cases delay. Corruption is an issue in courts in Ghana, and if a plaintiff does not have the money to sustain a case, it often means the case will not be heard (Atuguba, 2018). Communities or individuals coming together to challenge the government in court about its responsibility to provide access to sanitation services would be a long, expensive and complicated process.

Further, experts have pointed to issues in measuring successes for SDGs 3, 6, 10 and 11. For example, defining and measuring access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation especially around definitions of 'improved' facilities as defined by a WHO/UNICEF programme, and who has access to these sources might skew data and so progress (Lucci, Bhatkal and Khan, 2018). Valencia et. al (2019) pointed to vague language in SDG 11, which leads to difficulties in measuring progress or to undertake international comparisons.

Despite these challenges, the right to sanitation has been outlined in prior declarations and the SDGs. There are also case studies from across the world which highlight government's not upholding this right to sanitation, which the following section will address.

2.5.2 The Right to Sanitation: Case Studies

International and national laws are available to make sanitation a human right. However, studies across the world on access to these basic services show there is still much progress needed. Human Rights Watch (HRW, 2017) argued Lebanon was not upholding its duty to citizens through the ICESCR and its obligation for citizens to have a right to health because Lebanon was allowing open burning of waste, instead of it being disposed of safely because the nation lacked adequate waste management services. Open burning of waste may have serious health consequences for people living nearby, including heart disease and respiratory illnesses (HRW, 2017). However, even developed nations such as Sweden, as Davis and Ryan (2017) noted, fell short on international sanitation obligations. They found Roma, who are a minority in Sweden, were denied access to water and sanitation and evicted from locations as authorities argued they had poor sanitation, which was discriminatory and violated international obligations of human health, which included universal access to water and sanitation.

In India, Murthy (2012) studied access to water and sanitation in informal settlements of Mumbai through a human rights lens, finding provisions of basic services, like sanitation, were dependent on both land security and land ownership. Murthy's study found that land ownership issues were the reason why the central government agencies in Mumbai often refused to allow the state and municipal governments to improve access to services for settlements located on central government's land. Murthy (2012) argued the central government of India could be violating its obligations to respect the human right to water and sanitation under international and its national laws. Likewise, lack of solid waste management in Bangalore, India included violations of human rights (Gowda, Chandrashekar, Sridhara and Hemalatha, 2013). Despite India's constitution outlining the state's responsibility in raising the standard of living and improving public health, including the right to access basic amenities including garbage disposal and maintenance, the poor were left to deal with waste disposal on their own, which has adverse effects on health and the environment (Gowda et al., 2013).

These examples show duty-bound states in both the developed and developing world are not always upholding the right to sanitation and water for residents and citizens. The implications of this is adverse effects on human health and the environment. There is still much progress needed, an argument covered in the next chapter by looking at Accra.

2. 5 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has explained the place of human rights in development has been cemented in the past decades as a means to hold states accountable to their duties to citizens, including the right to sanitation, a right which has been outlined by the African Union, and the United Nations and most recently in the SDGs. As problematic as it can be, taking RBAs to ensure access to these human rights is important for citizens who need them fulfilled to improve their livelihoods and expand their freedoms. As explained, RBAs are based on the principles of human rights, but they allow for the progressive realisation of rights, which has created a sense of conflict as this does not help those who suffer from sanitation-related diseases today - especially for the urban poor. It is important to ensure there is a focus on empowering the poor while focusing on fixing the institutions tasked with realising these rights, to alleviate sanitation-related issues and so improve livelihoods. As this chapter has outlined, the right to sanitation is interlinked with other rights and deprivations, including poor health and economic losses, which will be further expanded in the following chapter which focuses on Accra.

CHAPTER THREE: SANITATION IN URBAN GHANA

3.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces Accra and its development history and challenges in sanitation service provision. As was outlined in Chapter One, the state of sanitation is a looming issue in Accra, where about 26% of solid waste remains uncollected, (Oduro-Appiah et. al 2017, p.1154). This chapter will explore the literature on the right to sanitation, as started in Chapter Two, in the context of Accra. It first describes the sanitation situation in Accra, and then explores how this situation affects Accra's urban development, especially in outlining the obstacles residents in Accra experience in accessing safe sanitation.

3.2 The Context of Accra

Ghana's capital Accra is under the authority of the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA). The AMA sits inside an area known as Greater Accra, which is a combination of the AMA area, the Tema Municipal Assembly area and the Ga District Assembly. The 2018 population of Accra was estimated at about 2 million, there was an additional daily influx of more than 2 million people who commuted to the city for various socio-economic activities, so 2018 estimates combined commuters and residents to a population of about 4 million people in the city each day (Accra Metropolitan Assembly [AMA], 2018, par.2). The AMA is responsible for providing municipal works and services in the district, which includes sanitation (AMA, 2018; Owusu, 2010).

Accra's layout is a continuation from colonial times when the city was set up with the British settling in prime, elevated areas and the local population crowded into lower plains vulnerable to flooding. Today, high-income households are still in these privileged areas (for example, Ridge, Airport or Cantonments, see figure 3.1) and the poor are still in the lower plains, many of which are informal settlements (Rain, Engstrom, Ludlow, and Antos, 2011). The areas that are highly populated and underserved by authorities are Old Accra and Korle Gonno and migrant communities such as Nima, Sabon Zongo and Old Fadama (see figure

3.1). Accra has high levels of internal migration from people migrating from rural areas or smaller towns and natural population increases. So, over the decades the city has expanded outwards with the legal boundaries adjusted to account for ongoing expansion (Ardayfio-Schandorf et al., 2012).

Since records began, Accra has suffered perennial flooding. The June 2015 disaster was the tenth major flooding event the city had seen (Asumadu-Sarkodie, Owusu, and Rufangura, 2015). Several factors have been attributed to the number of floodings over the decades, including erosion and sediment buildup in the drains, building on or near waterways, inadequate drainage capacity, poor waste management practices, and increasing urbanisation, with lack of regulation (Asumadu-Sarkodie et.al. 2015). Deadly flooding events have continued since 2015, with especially low-lying areas affected (Yeboah, 2019; Yusif, 2018).

Accra is the hub for central government, businesses, educational institutions, development and manufacturing. The mean annual income of a household in Accra is GHS63,027[2], almost double the national average of GHS33,937[3] (Ghana Statistical Service, 2018, p.xx). In Accra, statistics show there are about double the amount of people employed in the formal sector than the informal (Ghana Statistical Service, 2015, p. 31). Accra generally also has better educational access and outcomes compared to other areas, where households also spend more money on education in Accra compared to other regions. Despite Accra having these higher household income averages, formal employment, and educational outcomes, inequality within the city is prominent with the poor struggling to access essential services, as will be outlined below.

[2] Approximately NZD 18, 200
[3] Approximately NZD 9,800

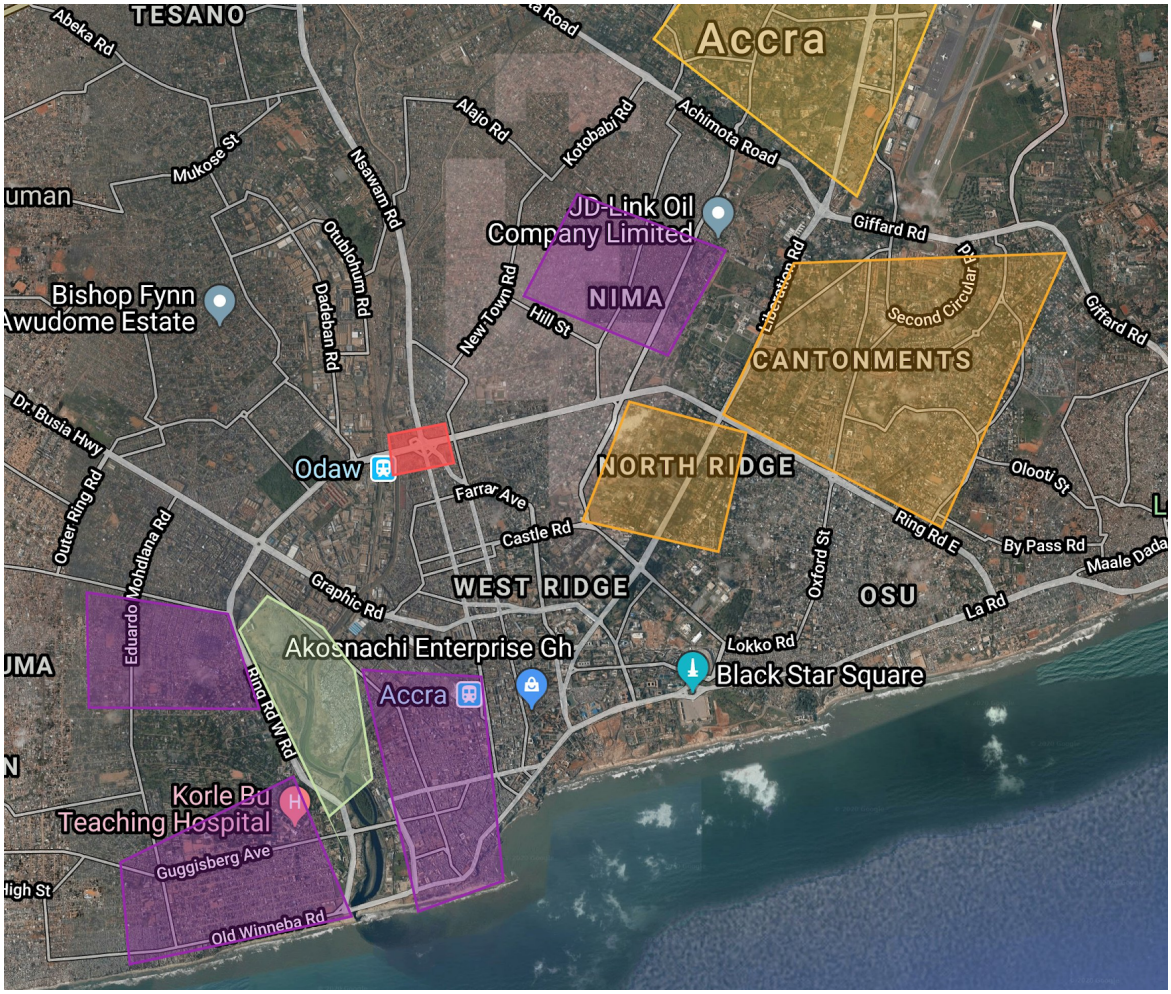

Figure 3.1: Map of Accra, showing low and high income areas, and the site of the June, 2015 disaster. *Credit: S. Knott, created with Google Maps*

3.3.1 Accra's Urban Poor

Accra has growing informal or unplanned settlement populations. Accra alone had 265 slums (Ghana Federation of the Urban Poor, 2016. p.i). While data varies, it is estimated about 45% of Accra's population lives in informal settlements (Obeng-Odoom, 2011,p.360).

The city has problems with land use planning and development controls and the housing supply is unable to keep pace with the demands (Ardayfio-Schandorf et al., 2012). The poor do not have legal rights in the ownership of urban spaces; the majority do not own land, but live in areas encroached on, like informal settlements. The poor have to rely on the informal sector for survival, including their housing, employment and access to services as Crenstil and Owusu (2018) describe, also noting that the city authorities view those who live in informal settlements as a nuisance, and often undertake eviction exercises which result in substantial losses for people who work in the informal economy.

These informal settlements are often made up of men, women and children who migrated to Accra from rural areas in search of economic opportunities unavailable to them in their hometowns, but they often end up working in menial labour (Human Rights Council, 2018). Many end up living in Old Fadama, one of the biggest informal settlements in Accra, home to at least 100,000 people, where people live in "cramped, polluted, and often diseased conditions" without access to basic services (Human Rights Council, 2018, p.4). Those who live in Old Fadama are mostly from Ghana's north which itself is underdeveloped and impoverished, which dates back to the neglect and subordination it experienced in colonial times, seen as a labour reservoir, producing a mostly non-literate migrant labour force for industries in the south (Brukum, 1998). Despite investments in the north in recent decades, there remains a deep socio-economic divide between Ghana's north and the south, and the migrant flow from north to south for work remains today. Inequality between the two widens (Tsikata and Seini, 2004). Writers from Ghana's north have documented their discrimination when they head south and are 'othered', experiencing stereotyping of being poor, primitive, violent, illiterate and only suitable for unskilled work (Akansake, 2013; Nuhu, 2003). While a survey found different ethnic groups in Ghana viewed one of the north's major ethnic groups as aggressive, impatient, envious, suspicious, having low self-esteem and being difficult (Lawson, Akotia, and Asumeng, 2015). As will be described in Chapter Five, those in Old Fadama have been both negatively targeted by authorities in recent years through eviction exercises, and excluded from public services.

However, urban deprivations are not unique to Old Fadama – a nearby settlement, home to people indigenous to the area, had similar issues of neglect, poverty, overcrowding, and ineffective provision of services (Oteng-Ababio and Arguello, 2014). While in household

surveys of informal settlements across Accra, Erman et al. (2018) found cheaper rent within the flood-prone areas in informal settlements, but households overall lacked access to infrastructure services, compared to the rest of the city.

3.3 Sanitation Practices and Policies in Accra

As was described in Chapter One, Accra is a growing city where demand for sanitation services has not kept up with supply. Ghana's Environmental Sanitation Policy outlines the different roles stakeholders have towards environmental sanitation, including central government's overall responsibility for issuing guidelines on environmental sanitation services and their management while local assemblies like the AMA are responsible for waste management and enforcing sanitary regulations and providing sanitation infrastructure facilities. The policy also states the private sector should provide the bulk of environmental sanitation services under the supervision of the public sector, especially the local assemblies. Individuals and households are tasked with keeping their environments clean, including drains, and safely disposing of waste and participating in communal cleaning exercises, when they fail to do this, the policy states competent authorities can take action against them (Government of Ghana, 2010).

Despite the designated responsibilities, as Accra grows, resource consumption increases, which leads to increasing amounts of waste which the city cannot deal with which creates poor conditions (Boadi and Kuitunen, 2005). When considering June 3rd and its dramatic effects, the areas affected and the fact most people affected were the urban poor (Erman et al., 2018), how Accra deals with its sanitation issues is important. There are many health and economic factors that poor sanitation is linked to and have an overwhelming impact on the urban poor, for example, in 2012, the World Bank estimated poor sanitation costs Ghana's economy around $290 million each year, equivalent to 1.6% of its GDP due to lack of access to sanitary latrines and clean water, most of the costs came from the annual premature death of 19,000 Ghanaians, largely due to poor sanitation and hygiene (World Bank, 2012, p.1). According to the report, the poorest in Ghana are 22 times more likely to practice open defecation than the richest, and for the poorest, poverty means they are both more likely to have poor sanitation and have to pay proportionately more for the negative effects it has (World Bank, 2012, p.2).

In Accra, as is the case in Ghana generally, collected waste is taken to transfer sites by households or waste collectors, either formal or informal. Formal collectors are often private companies contracted by the local authorities to collect waste, often with dump trucks, collecting from households or businesses who pay monthly fees. Informal collectors usually deal directly with their customers (the households) who pay on a per-user basis, the collectors, either on foot or use motorised tricycles or pushcarts. Generally, the refuse from both the formal and informal methods is taken to the final dump site (Oteng-Ababio, 2011). However, there are issues with informal collectors dumping collected waste illegally. There is little done in waste segregation or recycling on a large scale in Accra. Ghana has nationwide sanitation days as the first Saturday of every month which started in 2014, where residents within their communities are meant to clean their areas, but community participation has dropped over the years (Abalo et al., 2017). Manteaw (2017) wrote, while well-meaning, the government initiative failed to make an impact because it was too focused on showmanship, with high profile personalities taking part, and was 'top down' and reactive, giving the impression cleaning communal areas (like streets) only needed to happen once a month.

3.3.1 Waste Collection and the Formal Sector

Since the colonial days, Accra's waste sector has been challenged by financial and human resource constraints and lack of political will. The past decades have seen different systems to deal with waste, including door-to-door collection for a fee, and free dumping in communal containers (Oteng-Ababio, 2011). By 1996, only 60-65% of waste in the city was being collected by the local authorities (World Bank, 1996, p.66) leading to transitioning to public-private partnerships, where waste collection services were contracted out to private operators (Oteng-Ababio et al., 2013). In June 2010 the AMA introduced fees-based collection where the city was split into zones, which private contractors were responsible for collecting from, each house or business was required to register with their designated contractor and pay for waste collection, the fees depended on income. By 2013, waste collection in the AMA was almost fully privatised (Oteng-Ababio et al., 2013). However, for the urban poor, an expectation they pay monthly fees was difficult when poverty and survival livelihoods were rife (Oteng-Ababio et al., 2013). There has been a gradual phasing out of communal containers in low and middle-income areas because they are seen as inefficient and result in people dumping waste in unauthorised areas, like drains (Boadi and Kuitunen,

2003). In 2014, the AMA concluded communal containers in neighbourhoods led to illegal dumping by households to avoid the fees charged at the container sites, so started to replace the containers with household storage bins; in 2014, 40% of households had these (AMA 2014, p.10; Oduro-Appiah et al., 2017). Total collection coverage from the formal sector stands at around 55% (Oduro-Appiah et al., 2017, p.1157). Inconsistent services from formal sector collection have been an issue in Accra (for example, service providers failing to come on time) resulting in waste burning and illegal dumping (Kanhai, Agyei-Mensah, and Mudu, 2019). The formal service providers dispose of waste across two controlled facilities within a 45-km radius of the city and one composting plant, the two facilities combined take an estimated 606 tons of solid waste from Accra (Oduro-Appiah et al., 2017, p.1155).

3.3.2 Waste Collection and the Informal Sector

Privatising waste management services in Accra and removing communal containers has not increased the formal coverage of waste collection, but instead increased the informal coverage. Data shows informal collectors picked up about 28% of Accra's solid waste and disposed of it in a dumpsite developed from a wetland while estimates of about 26% of solid waste remains uncollected in Accra (Oduro-Appiah et al., 2017, p.1154). The informal collectors have at times been discouraged by authorities, who often treat informal collectors as a nuisance, or label them as criminals. They face public scorn and harassment (Erman et al., 2018; Oduro-Appiah et al., 2017; Oteng-Ababio et al., 2013). However, their service is popular with users where they collect from houses and markets, including middle-income areas and poor areas formal companies do not service (Oteng-Ababio et al., p.101).

3.3.3 Access to Water

Access to safe drinking water is important because as Accra's population grows, the government is unable to keep up with supplying piped water infrastructure and services and there are still preventable epidemics due to lack of water and sanitation. In urban areas of Ghana, the state-owned Ghana Water Company Ltd is responsible for providing, conserving and distributing water (The World Bank, 2011). However, the vast majority of people in Accra do not have access to piped water, so people rely on water vendors or a nearby connection (Erman et al., 2018; Stoler, Weeks, and Fink, 2012). In recent years drinking water sold by private companies in 500ml plastic bags called sachets have become ubiquitous

in Accra and constitute a significant proportion of the plastic waste generated through Ghana, as users often drop the empty sachet on the streets or into the gutter. While the drinking water is quite safe, the plastic waste accumulation has caused concern (Stoler et al., 2012). In Greater Accra, 70.9% of households use sachet drinking water (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014, p.89). If households in Accra were provided with safe, piped water, it would be safe to assume the need for these plastic sachets would decrease, which would then see a decrease in the litter they cause in public spaces.

3.3.4 Access to Toilets

The urban poor often lack access to toilets, and often have to rely on pay-per-use public toilets where costs, cleanliness and safety dissuade users, which can lead to public defecation (Owusu, 2010). This practice adds to the solid waste problems as people will defecate in a plastic bag then drop it in the open gutters (Peprah et al., 2015). Looking at three poor urban communities in Accra, Owusu and Afutu-Kotey (2010) found on average only 23.2% of homes had a water closet toilet, compared with Accra's high-class residential areas where over 80% of households had in-house toilets (Owusu and Afutu-Kotey, 2010, p.5-6).

Access to safe toilet facilities is an ongoing issue, largely due to policy implementation challenges and inadequate financing by government (Appiah-Effah et.al., 2019). Data shows the total access to basic sanitation in urban Ghana is estimated at 25% (Ghana Statistical Service, 2018). The burden of sanitation provision is treated as private with little financing to help households construct toilets which is costly often due to limited or lacking sewage systems (Appiah-Effah et.al., 2019). Ghanaian authorities advocate households invest in and maintain private toilets, and in doing so discourage open defecation and other forms of unsafe sanitation, like communal and shared latrines, bucket and open-pit latrines (Awunyo-Akaba et al., 2016). However, in Ghana, aside from household financial issues, tenant and land rights issues are a barrier – households cannot or do not want to invest in personal toilets if they are on rented property and plan to move on eventually (Awunyo-Akaba et al., 2016). There is a high demand for basic and affordable housing in Accra so landlords can avoid providing or maintaining private toilets. There is the additional risk of a landlord raising the rent if improvements are made in housing (Awunyo-Akaba et al., 2016).

3.3.5 Recent Efforts to Address Sanitation in Accra

Despite the above issues in sanitation provision in Accra, recent years have seen the government and development partners try to improve access. In 2017 President Akufo-Addo sett up Ghana's first Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources. Before 2017, water and sanitation were both handled by the Ministry of Water Resources, Works and Housing, creating this new ministry was to ensure sanitation and water were not neglected (Arku, 2017). In 2018, Akufo-Addo spoke about Ghana's cities being "engulfed by filth" and called on public authorities to improve them and for Accra to fulfil a pledge he had made to make it the cleanest city in Africa by the end of his term ("2018 State of", 2018). However, the sanitation sector – even before it became a separate ministry - has been plagued by inefficiencies, under-resourcing (Government of Ghana, 2010) and corruption scandals over the past few decades (Coleman, 2018; "Govt cancels," 2019). In several of his public addresses on the topic, since taking office, Akufo-Addo has emphasised personal responsibility ("Stop dumping," 2019; Yeboah, 2017). In his 2019 State of the Nation address, he pledged Accra would see sanitation bylaws enforced over those who litter ("Akufo-Addo's," 2019).

Since June 3rd, the Odaw channel has been dredged to help prevent further flooding (Adogla-Bessa, 2019; Boadu, 2017). In 2019, the AMA launched Accra's first Resilience Strategy to strengthen the city's adaptation to global changes and local stresses, including by embracing informality as an engine of growth and designing infrastructure to improve the natural and built environments (AMA, 2019c). Within Greater Accra, other assemblies have piloted revenue-raising rates for sanitation service use, though there is no evidence yet of the effectiveness of this (Appiah-Effah et.al., 2019).

In 2013, Ghana received a US$150 million grant from the World Bank for the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area Sanitation and Water Project (GAMA SWP) to support government efforts to increase access to improved sanitation and water supply in the GAMA, with an emphasis on low-income communities and to strengthen the management of environmental sanitation, by 2019 the project had almost met its target and constructed around 18,000 households toilets and around 400 school toilets within Greater Accra, connected 5000 households to water supplies, and constructed a drain to stop flooding in one area on the outskirts of Accra (GAMA SWP, 2019, p.6-10). The project requires households to

contribute funding towards the construction of their toilet and works with licensed financial institutions willing to offer regular savings plans and affordable loan products for the households (Appiah-Effah et.al, 2019).

However, Agbefe et. al (2019) writes to date; efforts to improve waste management have not seen significant improvements in the environmental sanitation situation in the country. As will be explained in the following section, access to sanitation in Accra is a rights and development issue, where a continued lack of access will have ongoing consequences for the urban poor and their human rights.

3.4 Sanitation as a Development and Rights Issue in Accra

This following section introduces how and why a lack of access to sanitation services in Accra affects the urban poor and further perpetuates inequalities. In developing nations, urban sanitation has been seen as a way to protect public health, often by carrying wastewater away from cities as quickly as possible. Making sanitation in cities sustainable is often not prioritised due to other development issues authorities and even users might want to tackle with their limited funds (Andersson, Dickin and Rosemarin, 2016). However, globally, there is a push to remedy poor sanitation and improve the environmental, health and economic outcomes poor sanitation has been linked to, and to do so sustainably.

3.4.1 The Urban Poor and Rights to Sanitation Access in Accra

Inequality and poverty, as described in this and the previous chapter, are linked to a lack of access to essential services. Without services from authorities, residents have to rely on private services which can be more costly than if they had access to public services (Owusu, 2010). In Accra, infectious diseases caused by poor sanitation and poverty have been found the most common diseases affecting residents (Boadi and Kuitunen, 2005). Erman et al. (2018) found the June 2015 flooding had a large impact on livelihoods and well-being in the short and long term for the poorest and most vulnerable people in Accra, who are likely less able to cope with and recover from a flood than the rest of the population.

Poor sanitation builds into a city-wide issue with the accumulation of refuse which blocks drains and exacerbates flooding, increasing disaster risks and spreading infectious diseases such as malaria or cholera, as was the case in 2014 when Accra saw a major cholera outbreak (Songsore, 2017). Songsore (2017) describes a loop of poverty and deprivations, where diseases are further spread and escalated by the continuation of poor hygiene behaviour and inadequate access to water and sanitation services. The inadequate access is the main reason for indiscriminate dumping of refuse, and the city-wide accumulation of refuse blocks drains and promotes further flooding, which in turn, reinforces the cycle of individual and household poverty including the spread of diseases and property loss. Those who do not dispose of their waste through collection services or indiscriminate dumping might burn it, which causes respiratory health symptoms (Boadi and Kuitunen, 2005).

Researchers have pointed to communities in Accra not having access to services and infrastructure for sanitation, mostly because of a lack of public financing (Danso-Wiredu, 2018; Owusu and Afutu-Kotey, 2010). When Accra's urban poor residents do not have access to services from public authorities, local associations, private individuals or non-profit organisations are forced to take on this role, including laying pipes for liquid waste and organising clean-up effort. Sometimes, residents express frustrations about not being serviced by authorities, or over services being subcontracted to incompetent private businesses who are awarded contracts due to personal or political affiliations, where the sanitation service remains poor (Danso-Wiredu, 2018; Owusu and Afutu-Kotey, 2010). Within markets in Accra, Agbefe et.al (2019) found women traders were unwilling to pay for waste collection often because they had seen substandard services attempting to offer this in the past. They were skeptical of new initiatives, and fees were often too high compared to their low earnings. Yet, there is evidence investment into the sanitation sector pays off: every dollar invested in improved water and sanitation has been estimated to generate a fourfold return in the form of reduced health care costs, greater productivity and involvement in the workplace (WHO, 2014). This emphasis on people valuing sustainable sanitation and understanding its benefits reflects Sen's (2013) argument outlined in Chapter Two, moving from development looking at fulfilling basic needs, to people having freedoms and capabilities - leading to having a reason to value and advocate for something.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined urban poverty in Accra and described challenges the poor face in accessing housing, jobs and services, especially those in the informal settlements. This chapter outlined how Accra deals with its sanitation and how gaps in the formal waste management systems have led to a reliance on informal collectors. Access to toilets and water have been explained and how limited access to these add to solid waste management issues. While some efforts have been made in recent years to deal with sanitation in Accra, as this chapter outlined, there are still many challenges especially for the poor, where lack of access to safe sanitation adds to the cycle of poverty.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY, METHODS AND ETHICS

4.1 Introduction

This study is concerned with language and its impacts on the urban poor, so has relied on qualitative methodology. The primary data collected was from media articles from Ghana's newspaper, *The Daily Graphic,* which is a government-owned outlet. It is Ghana's most popular paper, and its stories appear online. As this chapter will explain, I did not undertake a full critical discourse analysis because of the constraints of this report, however I focused on select articles to analyse power structures and consequences over the language and arguments used about sanitation in Accra, and by whom. This chapter will explain these principles.

In order to understand the articles' context, it is important to first recognise Ghana's mediascape. Mainstream media outlets like the *Daily Graphic* have the power to set agendas for public discourse, by focusing public interest on particular subjects, from giving voice to the voiceless, to negatively covering vulnerable groups of people, which can result in public hardening of perceptions towards the targeted group. Through agenda setting, the media can decide whose perspectives count, which will inform public debate (Happer and Philo 2013). Ghana's mediascape is vibrant, with media setting agendas to affect change on issues of significance (Isbell and Appiah-Nyamekye, 2018). This vibrancy has developed as the nation has, since independence Ghana has been under both democratic and military rule, in the 1992 return to democracy and the media's liberalisation, news media outlets proliferated as information sources, with the media's independence enshrined in the 1992 constitution (Sikanku, 2014). However, despite Ghana's democratic principles, referring to state-owned media, Kwansah-Aidoo (2003) found a history of the government-owned outlets supporting the government of the day, as governments would interfere with the operations of the media. Private media, in comparison, became the primary way in which opposition parties could challenge the government (Kwansah-Aidoo, 2003).

While studies have found radio and TV are the most popular means people receive news reports in Ghana (Isbell and Appiah-Nyamekye, 2018), radio and TV shows often get their news from the newspapers. As a consequence, newspapers set the news-agenda (Nyarko,

2016). Often, media houses' daily reporting agenda will start with reading the newspapers, which will then set the broadcasters' agendas and then the online news platforms (Nyarko, 2016). Studies in Ghana have looked at the *Daily Graphic's* role in agenda-setting – how this newspaper's focus on specific issues can convince people into thinking those issues are important (Kwansah-Aidoo, 2003). Further, Sikanku (2014) analysed how Ghanaian media outlets, including the *Daily Graphic*, mirrored each other's agendas, concluding the newswire and the newspapers continue to occupy a dominant position within Ghana's media landscape. However, the media did tend to mirror other outlets' news stories, so the media had the potential to create comparable news agendas (Sikanku, 2014).

To further understand arguments used by authorities and the consequences of their rhetoric, my research was involved with analysing four texts from the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) news section on its website and one social media post (AMA, 2018a; AMA, 2018b; AMA, 2019; AMA, 2019a; AMA, 2019b). As a local government agency, the AMA is responsible for sanitation in Accra. Analysing these texts was to gain insight into the local government's discourse. Because the aim of this study was interested in how the poor are affected by public discourses and was using a rights-lens, I also approached settlers to understand the views of the poor, through semi-structured interviews. The following section explains the methodology and reason for it, followed by methods, ethics, my positionality and the research limitations.

4.2 Using a Qualitative Methodology

This study uses a qualitative approach, which is based on the understanding that individuals socially construct meaning as they interact with their world. A constructed reality is not singular or fixed. Qualitative methodology is concerned with knowing how "people understand and experience their world at a particular point in time and in a particular context" (Merriam and Grenier, 2019 p.4). In qualitative research, data is purposefully selected, often from interviews, which should be in the participants' natural surroundings to understand the context they are in, and or using documents to help understand the problem and the research question, and find themes within the data (Creswell, 2014). In a qualitative approach, a researcher would usually rely on multiple sources of data to build a rich picture, building themes from the data in an inductive process, and gathering evidence as more ideas or

perspectives are found through the research process (Creswell, 2014; Pickard, 2013). I chose a qualitative methodology because this study is concerned with understanding and describing the social and political context that shapes how people view sanitation issues in Accra, and how elites might shape this, due to their status and access to the media and resources. This research focused on the language, rhetoric and arguments presented in newspaper articles and semi-structured interviews, and local government texts. The data from the articles and interviews were analysed and a number of different discourses were identified – these will be outlined below.

4.3 Research Methods Employed

As Creswell (2014) wrote, in qualitative research, validity and credibility are top priorities. Accordingly, I sought out a large range of articles for analysis to ensure the discourses identified were clear and consistent, and semi-structured interviews enriched findings and offered additional information and perspectives. Merriam and Grenier (2019) state data collection should be purposive and reach a point of saturation, where themes link the data together, while understanding their context. The following section will explain the methods used to collect and generate this research data.

4.3.1 The Daily Graphic and Critical Discourse Analysis Principles

This research relied on articles from the *Daily Graphic* from June in 2015, 2017 and 2019. The month of June was chosen because of the June 3rd, 2015, disaster and its anniversaries and June being Ghana's rainy season. World Environment Day is in June, which usually leads to a focus on sanitation and the environment in the media. I used the *Daily Graphic's* online database to find and compile articles for my research, as at least from 2015, articles from the paper have also appeared online - and often there were more updated stories posted online than would have been in the paper copy. Articles that directly mentioned the disaster, its causes, consequences and efforts to prevent further ones were analysed, as were articles about issues around waste management and sanitation issues in Accra, how to address them, and/or the consequences of poor sanitation. In total, 37 articles in June 2015, 10 for June 2017 and 11 for June 2019 were chosen for my research. As this was qualitative research, the

actual number of articles analysed was not a key focus, although in explaining the number of articles to choose from within these parameters showed the disaster and sanitation were a topical issue in these months. Critical discourse analysis principles were used in this research including analysing the expression and presentation of power relations especially between the state and citizens. Critical discourse analysis connects language use and power – specifically how elites use language to influence society and exercise power, including setting agendas (Taylor, 2013).

As explained in Chapter One Ghana is hierarchical society where elites hold much influence (Hasty, 2016; Hofstede Insights, 2019). This is reflected in their access to the media, which itself is a form of privilege, and can determine whose story is told, and how. In the case of elites, such as politicians, access means having the ability to make information official and influencing society into accepting proposed ideas or establish consensus, making an idea normalised. This influence can mean the dominant group - elites - work to ensure the dominated do not share the access to power and wealth they enjoy, which they do through manipulation or persuasion, using discourse and communication to do so. Using their power and influence, eventually their discourse on a topic will enter the mass media, becoming an ideology (Dunn and Neumann, 2016; Khan, 2012; Taylor, 2013; Thurlow and Jaworski, 2017; Van Dijk,1994). I wanted to place what was said in the newspaper articles within the socio-economic contexts (as were outlined in Chapters One, Two and Three). Further, critical discourse analysis interrogates how "specific systems of meaning have been generated, circulated, internalised, and/or resisted" (Dunn and Neumann, 2016, p.4), by offering a way of understanding priorities and values shared by members of society, and by examining inequality and the workings of power in society (Taylor, 2013).

Another principle of critical discourse analysis is acknowledging different perspectives and sets of interests as there are multiple versions of reality (Taylor, 2013). For example, people within the same municipal department might have different messages on what should be done to correct sanitation problems in Accra. The point was not checking the truth of what was claimed, but to understand how what was said, was constructed (Taylor, 2013). Analysing what is said, and what is not in the news media, forms an integral part of this research, where power dynamics could exclude people seen as holding a lesser important perspective - for example, a squatter who is affected by poor sanitation in her settlement may not be approached for an interview by journalists. My research is concerned with not only what is

said, but by whom and how they are presented. It does not exclusively look at elites' language, it is also interested in what non-elites say in these articles; for example, if a female squatter was interviewed, how the journalist presented her was essential to analyse. Further, as Rapley explained: "language is never treated as a neutral, transparent, means of communication" (2008, p.2). Understanding the context of power and knowledge is a way to challenge the dominant ideology, which is important in RBAs.

With this understanding of the role elites have in forming public opinion and the access they have to the media, using these critical discourse analyse principles I analysed newspaper articles and explored what Ghana's elites - politicians, authorities and leaders – have said about sanitation issues in Accra. This focus on public opinion helped to understand how elites perceived the poor's role in the city's sanitation issues.

Three different discourses became apparent from reading all the relevant articles and understanding the context they were in, the prominence of the person speaking and what they said. These discourses were: *responsibility*, which included taking, avoiding or attributing responsibility for sanitation issues; *solutions* to sanitation issues and *othering of the poor*. 'Othering' is a social phenomenon which reflects us versus them hierarchical mentality, where an individual or group are perceived as inferior and suffer discrimination. Othering can be due to being from a different culture, ethnicity, tribe, or religion, among other identities, this perceived difference, either real or imagined, is used to discriminate to varying degrees. However, it is overall, a reflection of a power-imbalance (Staszak, 2009). Othering has been linked to postcolonialism, where tactics learned or systems created under colonial rule are still perpetuated in society after independence (Jones, & Manda, 2006). This research was interested in othering of Accra's poor, especially those in Old Fadama, as was introduced in Chapter Three.

Being a journalist in Accra, I was able to acknowledge the prominence of people who featured in the articles (for example, politicians). I relied on what I had learnt from the literature review (Chapters Two and Three), and my personal knowledge of Accra, to understand the contexts. Keywords were initially picked out of the articles, but the overall context and perspectives within the articles were more important.

Some of the keywords within each discourse were:

> **Responsibility:** blame, clean-up efforts, citizens, community, collectors, eye-sore, expense, human activities, illegal structures, illegal settlements, indiscriminate dumping, irresponsible, rights.
>
> **The othering of Accra's poor:** hawkers, illegal dumping, indigenous residents, indiscipline, low-income, migrants, open-defecation, slum-dwellers.
>
> **Solutions:** enforcement exercises, eviction, solutions, education, financial support, fined, funding, law enforcements, private sector, prosecution, sustainable, taskforce, threats.

Once an article was placed in its discourse category, each article was analysed using the below questions:

- What is the purpose or reasoning of this article?
- Who is affected or targeted in it?
- Who says what and why?
- Whose voice is missing?
- What are the key issues?
- How much of the article is covering this discourse? (for example, most of the article, or a few paragraphs)
- Is this theme related to other themes?
- What other discourses are addressed in the article?

4.3.2 Interviews

Speaking to poor people in Accra allowed for an understanding on how people interpret their experiences with access (or lack of) to sanitation, how they might construct their worlds, and the meaning they attribute to their experiences (Merriam, and Tisdell, 2016). Robert Chambers advocated for putting the poor and marginalised at the centre of development processes, from identification to implementation, while calling for self-awareness from those in the sector (Parnwell, 2006). Chambers argued those in development were themselves elites and outsiders so could not understand poverty due to their own biases, often due to issues of access (Chambers, 1981). Chamber's arguments on who is seen and who remains unseen are crucial to my research and why it was important to speak to those who experience poverty in Accra. Visiting the informal settlements to observe the sanitation issues and talking to people in the area about what they had experienced was central to my study. Using a rights approach to qualitative methodology allows for reflection on power relations and responsibility, and how the interviewees expressed this, including to explore whom interviewees think is ultimately responsible for sanitation in Accra and whether this body/group is upholding their responsibility.

With their informed consent (see appendix 2 for an example) I interviewed five different people for my research, the first three were interviewed at their workplace offices. The interviewees were:

- A former waste management director at the Accra Metropolitan Assembly for more insight into the AMA's role, responses and reactions after June 3rd and ongoing sanitation issues in Accra.

- A programmes manager with a pro-poor NGO which works with a human rights agenda for Ghana's poor, to understand the context to sanitation access for Accra's poor.

- A squatter resident of Old Fadama who works for a pro-poor organisation and is a community leader, on his personal experiences and perspectives on sanitation.

- Two women in Old Fadama on their experiences and perspectives, interviewed at one of their food kiosks in the Agbogbloshie informal settlement, adjacent to where they live in Old Fadama.

Questions were semi-structured and open-ended to allow for a more natural flow. Follow up questions were used to probe further on certain answers. Questions for all interviews were prepared similarly but adapted to the situation and to suit the interviewee's terminology and language. This semi-structured approach allowed for adapting questions as the interview progressed to allow the participant to express their worldview, as Merriam and Tisdell (2016) had suggested.

4.3.3 Access to Participants

To access the interviewees, I used networks I had already established in Accra. The pro-poor NGO programmes manager introduced me to one Old Fadama resident. Another contact I had met in my role as a journalist, has a business in the Old Fadama area. He introduced me to two women residents who agreed to participate in my study. This contact, with agreement of the participants, and after signing a confidentiality agreement (see appendix 3), translated residents' interviews. The AMA manager was also someone I had had prior contact with as a reporter. However, I reached out to the AMA waste management department and was connected with him, rather than contacting him directly. I wanted to see who the AMA thought was best to speak to. I had tried to interview a director at the Sanitation Ministry; however, after initially meeting with him to explain my research and request an interview which he consented to, he later could not be contacted, so the interview did not happen.

4.4 Positionality

In reflecting on my role in this research, as someone who lives in Accra and sees the state of sanitation and the outcomes of it (flooding and deaths) I remained aware of my own biases and perspectives. Throughout my fieldwork and the process of analysing articles in search of the discourse dominant in media reporting around sanitation, I remained aware of my positionality and bias as a reporter and the different way I might approach reporting compared to journalists in Ghana.

4.5 Ethics

This research has gone through Massey University's ethics procedures and was evaluated low risk. Discussing ethical consideration with my supervisor and an additional Development Studies staff member, we looked at dealing with my position as a journalist who had covered stories about human rights, development, poverty, and sanitation in Ghana, and how to avoid any conflict of interest or overlapping of roles. I presented each participant with an information sheet (see appendix 1, for an example) and had conversations to be transparent about my journalist profession in other occasions, and my role as student throughout this research, and to clarify that interviews were not being used for journalistic purposes. I have kept the location for my fieldwork separate during all of 2019, the entire period of my research report writing and fieldwork, and did not report on Old Fadama, nor spoke to any of the interviewees for any journalistic work. I also asked participants, some with the help of an interpreter, how they wished to be referred to in the report. All opted to use their full names, but to respect their privacy - especially from authorities - I instead have opted not to publish names, instead referring to them by the positions they spoke from.

4.6 Limitations

This report was limited in providing a wealth of information due to word limits. I would have liked to look at other local media in Ghana, for example, radio shows and a private newspaper. However, the *Daily Graphic*, as explained, is Ghana's most popular daily paper, and sets the agenda for other media houses. My research only mentions corruption allegations around sanitation in Ghana (in Chapters Two and Three). Analysing this issue in depth was excluded because I did not want any personal ramifications or problems for my interviewees. While the media has focused on the direct victims of the disaster (for example survivors of the explosion) and their health implications and battles for compensation from the government in the ensuing years, again due to the word limits, this was not a core focus of this research. This research instead has focused on the effects of poor sanitation for the urban poor in general.

Another limitation I found was because of my profession as journalist, I have explained above how I dealt with ethical issues, and to mitigate any personal bias with self-reflection.

Being a reporter working in Ghana caused obstacles, because some officials or authorities might have been wary of my profession. I did not find this an issue when approaching any of the interviewees spoken to for the perspectives of the urban poor, but I believe this became the case with the director of the Sanitation Ministry. As a reporter, I would have pushed for the interview, as my job is to hold authorities to account, but as a student researcher, I knew this was not appropriate, so I gave up on contacting him after a few non-committal calls and enquiries. In all my interview requests, I ensured there was no cross over in my roles by explaining I was approaching them as a student researcher, not as a journalist.

4. 7 Chapter Conclusion

Using a qualitative methodology for my research was chosen because my research is about understanding how public discourses affect the urban poor in Accra. Elites globally shape public opinion and discourses, and Ghana is no exception. It is important to look at how and why public discourses come about and whose voice is heard, and what consequences there might be for this. Because this research is framed around rights, it seeks to understand the structural causes of issues: to understand how the relationship between the state and citizens is expressed and presented.

CHAPTER FIVE: NEWS ARTICLE AND INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

5. 1 Introduction

This chapter places the discourses identified in the *Daily Graphic* articles and the interviews into three different categories. It is primarily concerned with the first two research questions: exploring the public discourses on Accra's sanitation issues which have taken place since the flood and fire disaster in June 2015, and how these public discourses have described Accra's poor since June 2015. The first section in this chapter analyses discourses around *responsibility*, followed by those on *the othering of Accra's poor*, which is a consequence of these perceptions. The final discourse is on *solutions* to Accra's sanitation and urban development. Each section is structured by looking at the articles first, and the analysis is done chronologically in each subsection (2015, 2017 then 2019, to show how these discourses developed over this time). The analysis of the interviews in each themed category will then be placed after those on the articles. The last section of this chapter includes five selected public documents from the AMA to build into a larger picture of what authorities were saying regarding sanitation in Accra.

5.2 Responsibility - Who is Blaming Whom?

Responsibility was the strongest discourse through all articles analysed, but especially during June 2015. This section first analyses articles that hold authorities to account, then those about authorities taking responsibility, followed by articles that pointed to authorities avoiding responsibility. When authorities avoided responsibility, they often instead advocated citizens' responsibility for sanitation issues in Accra. This section ends with the interviewees' views on responsibility and sanitation in Accra.

5.2.1. Holding Authorities to Account - Articles

Public discourses on holding the government to account were prominent with articles in the aftermath of the June 2015 disaster. *Daily Graphic* journalist Obour (2015) reflected on calls for "heads to roll immediately" over the disaster, especially Accra's mayor, for failing to deliver the promises of fixing Accra's flooding. A former president, John Kufour, from the opposition party, was quoted by journalist Adjasah (2015) as stating it was the government's responsibility to prevent the disaster and not to blame individuals. He said:

> "Individuals could not be blamed; it is a challenge where knowledge is required to solve. It is time our professional institutions pressurise the government to prioritise and take the right decisions" (Kufour in Adjasah, 2015).

However, Adjasah, as the journalist reporting on this, did not clarify what these "right decisions" might be, or what is meant by "individuals" if this meant citizens or leaders. In another example of attributing responsibility, the fire service questioned safety at the fuel station which caught fire (Appiah, 2015), which then led to an outright denial of culpability from the state-owned fuel company which owned the station, rather, implying the company was a victim (Baneseh, 2015). A human rights group spoke out saying eviction actions of an informal settlement after the disaster did not consider human rights, looking at the state's responsibility to them (Boateng, 2015). Many articles emphasised the problems residents faced in the aftermath of June 3rd and residents' calls for assistance from authorities to clean up their areas, to provide waste management services and to take responsibility for the disaster (such as "Accra floods," 2015; Andoh, 2015; Bokpe, 2015; Jafaru, 2015c; Smith-Asante, 2015).

Holding authorities to account was not as prominently covered by the *Daily Graphic* in 2017 and 2019: in 2017 an article reported on billboards of politicians being removed in Accra, the writer assuming this was because the politicians had failed in their responsibility to clean up Accra ("Mayor and," 2017). In 2019 an alliance of civil society organisations (CSOs) on water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) visited the sanitation ministry advocating for it to take more action to meet targets and the SDGs, in quoting the group the article spoke of the

responsibility of the ministry, but also the responsibility the organisation felt it had to put pressure on the ministry (Darkoa, 2019).

For people to call on authorities to take responsibility for what they are mandated to do pointed to concerns there was perhaps a denial of responsibility by authorities in Accra, which will be looked at later.

5.2.2 Authorities Taking Responsibility - Articles

Some articles in the June 3rd aftermath reflected authorities showing responsibility and trying to prevent future disasters, including the AMA demolishing an informal settlement (these evictions and demolitions are explained in the following discourse category). The AMA faced backlash for the demolition but vowed to continue despite the protests, claiming it was taking responsibility to prevent future disasters (Bokpe, 2015a). Syme (2015b) wrote about Ghana's Vice President speaking on plans to pay for victims' hospital bills, clearing waterways and responding to a cholera outbreak (Syme, 2015b). Some writers reported private waste management companies or government authorities actions or pledges to clean up the city and their responsibility to do so, but politicians and waste management spokespeople in the articles also emphasised citizen responsibility, and need for changes in attitudes to stop throwing rubbish into drains and rivers, and calls to enforce laws in Ghana (Agyeman, 2015; Bentil, 2015; Boadu, 2015; "Graphic, Zoomlion," 2015; Issah, 2015; Jafaru, 2015b; Okyere, 2015; Syme, 2015).

In June 2017 Accra had a new mayor, and Ghana a new government. On the second anniversary of the disaster, articles explored what went wrong in 2015 and reflected on responsibility not having been taken for the disaster, with the 2017 administrations trying to fix the past administrations' mistakes (Boadu, 2017; Safo, 2017). There appeared to be a focus on private companies' waste management duties and their corporate social responsibility, and mutual back-patting between the AMA and private waste management company Zoomlion on the work done so far. Authors emphasised the need to enforce sanitation-related bylaws, calls for changes in personal attitudes, and communal cleanup efforts in Accra (Awiah, 2017; Awiah, 2017a).

While these articles focused on pledges the government made and some actions it undertook in Accra, such as demolishing areas and ensuring waste management companies worked, the following section shows ongoing problems in Accra, where authorities have avoided or rejected these responsibilities.

5.2.3 Authorities Avoiding Responsibility - Articles

When authorities avoided taking responsibility for sanitation issues in Accra, often it was apparent that they blamed those in society for sanitation issues, calling for personal responsibility. For example, when touring the disaster site in June 2015, Ghana's then-president John Mahama stated action was needed and for too long authorities were too sympathetic to address human activities that caused the flooding. Yeboah (2015) wrote:

> Blaming the disaster on human activities, President Mahama said people building in waterways and littering the drains have made it difficult for the flood water to flow because "…we've created human a intervention [sic] between the source of the rivers and the sea where they are headed". Mahama also said: "We have to take some measures to be able to avoid this in the future, and often when these moves are started, you have a lot of sympathy and pressure not to take those measures, but I think that the time has come for us to move out of the waterways and the public should understand that…I mean this loss of lives is catastrophic" (Yeboah, 2015).

Mahama appeared to hold individuals in society responsible for causing the disaster, and suggested the public had stopped authorities from doing their work. The area he toured and referred to when speaking about building in waterways, was a poor area. At a memorial service for the victims soon after the disaster, Mahama spoke of the 'unpredictability' of the disaster, alluding to an act of God, and called for an end to the "blame game" saying there were many factors to blame, but it was better to focus on prevention (Arku, 2015). The government agency tasked with weather alerts denied blame for failing to predict the weather accurately but rather blamed the disaster on those who built in waterways and indiscriminately dumped waste (Jafaru, 2015; Jafaru, 2015a). On June 16th, 2015, a

government-appointed committee was inaugurated to look into June 3rd and told not to find blame but explore how to avoid another disaster ("C'ttee to," 2015). The findings of this committee were outlined in Chapter One. After the disaster, a religious leader said: "This is not the time for blame game" (sic), and people needed to take responsibility for their safety (Syme, 2015a). Government advised citizens to avoid seeking shelter from the rain at fuel stations, which could be interpreted as those who did this - and died - might be to blame for their deaths ("Govt cautions," 2015).

In June 2017 and 2019 an NGO, a women's group and church leaders encouraged people in Accra to change attitudes towards sanitation (Adu-Gyamerah, 2019; Awiah, 2017a; Ocloo, 2019). While there was no mention of the anniversary of June 3rd, 2015, in any of the June 2019 articles, the link between sanitation and personal responsibility was still prominent, especially in marking World Environment Day. In an observational/editorialised piece on the state of Accra's sanitation and the outcomes, reporter Agyeman (2019) put the responsibility on personal actions and waste management systems and poor planning. Agyeman (2019) visited poor areas of Accra, where he described the practice of open defecation. Also in June 2019, elites featured in articles spoke about personal irresponsibility over sanitation, including former President Jerry John Rawlings:

> "Our current sense of self-discipline is at its lowest ebb. Citizens do not feel responsible enough to keep their homes and communities clean. Many of us who lament about flooding during the rainy season are very guilty of the indiscretions that lead to the deadly floods. We dump refuse indiscriminately and wonder why drains choke. Some actually see the rain as an opportunity to dump refuse, believing the rainwater will sweep them away. If we continue this level of lawlessness, we are bound to face more serious flood disasters" (Rawlings in Yeboah, 2019).

In addition, Ghana's president Nana Akufo-Addo spoke about his frustrations and admonished citizens who dumped refuse in drains:

> "We think that the easiest way to deal with refuse is to empty our bins into drains. That practice must stop. We all have a responsibility to ensure discipline in the way we dispose of waste, else all the investment the government is making in the sanitation sector will not yield the desired impact" (Akufo-Addo in "Stop dumping," 2019).

This section has highlighted the discourses from two former and one current president- three of Ghana's most powerful people, all of whom have placed responsibility for sanitation issues at the feet of citizens. However, as Chapter Three outlined, the urban poor, especially those in informal settlements often do not have access to proper sanitation services to dispose of their waste correctly.

5.2.4 Responsibility: Interviewees' Views

The interviews reflected on the work local and central government had undertaken since June 3rd to address sanitation in Accra. All interviewees outlined several interventions and they wanted more done by the authorities, which they unanimously recognised as being ultimately responsible for sanitation in Accra. However, participants also all emphasised the need for personal responsibility in their communities. According to the pro-poor NGO manager, since June 3rd the government had worked to clear water bodies and create systems to avoid future flooding. However, he questioned the usefulness of the sanitation ministry. He wanted to see the government intervene for Accra's poor who could not afford to eat, let alone pay for services. He advocated for services, education, and resources like waste bins to be collected regularly, and proper enforcement and punishment of offenders. He repeatedly pointed to personal responsibility, believing people were letting the government down with their poor attitudes and decisions not to pay for waste collection services. In access to toilets, he explained some people did prefer open defecation, due to cultural beliefs, or because the public toilets were sometimes badly maintained.

The women in the Old Fadama settlement observed flooding issues being solved slowly, especially in rubbish collection. However, they expressed disappointment in government inaction in their community, saying while the government might claim it was working to address issues, they had not seen it themselves. One of the women wanted the government to

take the lead as “individuals have very little they can do”. She added households, who had to rely on the informal collectors, were powerless to stop them from dumping their waste illegally in gutters or waterbodies. She said:

> “We are still back to square one, so they have to take the lead and provide a place where they can go and dump at the site, so they don’t go and dump it back into the same drainage that we are clearing.”

The women wanted the government to employ more people to clean the city, although both acknowledged financial constraints might prevent this. They felt citizens should play a role and were guilty of poor attitudes to waste management; they believed sanitation was a “shared responsibility”.

One Old Fadama resident called for more education and the city to enforce its sanitation bylaws. If “city dwellers don’t change their attitude in terms of sanitation the government will do his own best, but he cannot succeed,” he explained. While he felt the central government had done well in terms of infrastructure for sanitation, the resident found the city preferred to service formal communities, at the expense of the informal or poor communities who were ignored. He questioned the effectiveness of the waste management companies the AMA had contracted, as the city was still dirty and collection inefficient. The AMA official outlined the work the city had done in sanitation in Accra but conceded financial constraints were an issue in further improving services. He revealed it faced challenges including a large proportion of the population not able to or wanting to pay or fully pay for waste collection services. He attributed about 40% of the problem to citizens, due to poor attitudes and not wanting to pay for services: “people always have an excuse for doing the wrong thing”, he stated. He put 30% on the collectors who were not able to fully cover the areas they were given and then 30% to the AMA, who had not been able to put needed investments or projects in place, enforce laws or do enough education of citizens.

Because the disaster was so damaging and its causes many and complicated, claiming responsibility for it, and the sanitation issues Accra faces, comes with duties. The articles and interviews placed personal responsibility quite high, but often, this would sit alongside authorities and interviewees taking some responsibility.

5.3 The Othering of Accra's Poor

The othering of Accra's poor is related to placing responsibility but remains its own category because my research is about how public discourses have affected Accra's poor. As outlined in Chapter Four, othering reflects an 'us versus them' hierarchical mentality. In the case of Accra, othering has been especially prevalent against the informal settlements, including Old Fadama. In June 2015 othering discourses were voiced in response to the disaster. In the following years, for example 2017 and 2019, they were in regard to sanitation overall. Othering was a prominent topic of discussion during interviews, as four out of five of the interviewees either were or represented poor people in Accra in the informal settlements. Their experiences on access to sanitation came through strongly.

5.3.1 The Othering of Accra's Poor - Articles

In June 2015 articles reported on how and why mass evictions and demolitions of Old Fadama happened, and on reactions from those in the settlement and political leaders. The informal settlement was said to have contributed to the disaster as it was on reclaimed land, which blocked water flows. On June 13th President Mahama spoke of demolishing the settlement saying it was a danger to the city and those who lived there (Boadu, 2015b). On June 22nd, journalist Issah (2015a) reported on the AMA demolitions, stating residents had reacted to the demolition with insults and by burning structures but saying they had nowhere to go. The article expressed a sense of sympathy, with one resident declaring he wanted to commit suicide due to the action. The same article included the mayor explaining and defending the demolition (Issah, 2015a). Two articles on June 23rd offered reported observations on the demolition and the residents reacting by protesting in the area and through Accra, reportedly causing damage to properties. The pieces had a strong emphasis on the anger of the residents, calling them a "mob" and "irate". Protestors were quoted as saying evictions were "a blatant attempt to evacuate them from the capital" and they would not vote for the government. The articles strongly emphasised the damage protesters caused and a sense of sympathy for businesses caught up in the conflict ("AMA will," 2015; "Old Fadama," 2015). Following the demolition and the protest, twenty residents of the settlement were arrested by the police accused of throwing stones at police and journalists. The *Daily Graphic* only gave the police response outlining the actions and consequences of the protest ("Police arrest," 2015). Following the demolition and the backlash, the AMA stated there

would be no retreat (Bokpe, 2015a). In a follow up to the demolition another more sympathetic article to the displaced had reported observations of the effect of the demolition on the residents, while the AMA warned returning to the settlement was a prosecutable offence, but they would help people go back to their hometowns ("Displaced residents," 2015).

In 2017, scrap dealers - who are mostly impoverished migrant workers from the north and reside at Old Fadama (Hirsch, 2013) were being warned by the AMA they had to move from an area in the city, accused of making the settlement unsafe and dirty, including being responsible for generating refuse in public spaces. The reporter referred to them as 'scavengers' and 'rag and bone men'. Two scrap dealers spoke to the reporter saying they were not responsible for the refuse but paid to get it removed, regardless ("Scrap dealers", 2017). In 2019 an article blamed crime and sanitation problems on a different informal settlement in Accra, with an emphasis on responsibility and authorities skirting this, and government plans to deal with the informal settlement (Vinorkor and Adano, 2019).

5.3.2 The Othering of Accra's Poor - Interviewees' Views

One Old Fadama resident spoke at length about the demolitions after June 3rd, which happened during the rainy season and Ramadan, which the majority of residents observed. This interviewee believed local authorities continued to ignore Old Fadama, which he said does not have any access to safe sanitation. Promises by politicians to upgrade Old Fadama and provide sanitation services were never implemented. However, he found public toilets had been upgraded, but they were closed at night, so people still practiced open defecation. People inevitably generated waste in Old Fadama, and by not giving them access to services their only option was to illegal dump waste in the water body the settlement borders. He explained:

> "If I generate waste and I don't find a skip container to put it there in the community, and I can't put it inside my room, and I can't eat where do you think I put the waste then? I will put it in the lagoon."

The NGO manager agreed a lack of services in informal settlements, such as Old Fadama left residents little option but to dump their waste illegally. However, he added poor people were the problem in Accra even if they had access to a bin they would not pay to have it removed, and would rather wait for a rainy day where flowing water will transport the waste away through the open drains. Meanwhile, the AMA official believed poor sanitation in informal settlements was because residents were not willing to pay for services, while some were willing but unable to pay for the full costs. He reflected on ideas that some people do not get services:

> "So, the only option left to them is to dump in the drains, although I don't subscribe to those excuses but whether it's a factor or not that's what people believe in."

He outlined there were services for deprived areas, but there were still challenges, so they had to rely on the informal collectors to service them, which the city saw as a nuisance before June 3rd, but now observed the importance of them.

The othering of Accra's poor settlers' discourse reflected the underlying tensions in Accra. These were mostly directed towards the urban poor and those working in the informal sector, who do not have the stability of home, or access to services those in formal sectors or established areas might have. The urban poor, as these articles and interviews reflect, are often perceived as responsible for the state of poor sanitation in Accra, and the consequences of this, including flooding.

5.4 Solutions to Accra's sanitation issues and urban development

Aside from placing or avoiding responsibility over June 3rd and the following years, articles and interviewees focused on needed solutions to fix Accra's sanitation issues. The interviewees spoke about authorities' actions and what they want to see to help Accra's future development.

5.4.1 Long term solutions to Accra's development – Articles

After June 3rd, elites from outside of government called for long-term sustainable fixes for Accra's sanitation and flooding issues, including from the then leader of the opposition (current president) (Yeboah, 2015a). A trade union wanted the government to set up a task force to find long term solutions to flooding, rather than the quick fixes like demolishing people's homes and structures ("Set up," 2015). There were requests to change the way Ghana dealt with waste with suggestions of investment and scientific study in the sanitation sector (Smith-Asante, 2015a). In the following years, articles outlined methods to punish offenders as a way to fix sanitation issues. In June 2017 Gyesi (2017) wrote about arrests by the AMA and police of squatters who were being cleared to make way for a sanitation-related project along the Old Fadama area.

In that same month, Accra's mayor addressed the assembly about wanting to realise the president's pledge to clean up Accra but to do this, attitudes needed to change, and laws needed enforcing (Safo, 2017). Mensah wrote of the inauguration of a think tank on sanitation set up to find long term solutions to sanitation issues in Ghana, and the Minister of Sanitation spoke about the government's sanitation goals including the president's pledge to make Accra the cleanest city in Africa (Mensah, 2017). In June 2019 the president announced there would soon be a decision on banning plastics, campaigners said it would help make Accra Africa's cleanest city. However, local plastic manufacturers warned against it, preferring an emphasis on recycling (Agyeman and Kpormegbey, 2019, "We'll take," 2019). In June 2019 an article detailed public outrage against two women who were caught on a video shared on social media tipping their rubbish into the drains when it rained in the Madina community of Accra (another poorer area). The article said the women were being looked for by the police ("Police looking" 2019). A follow-up article in the same month said the women's landlord was fined in court and promised to sign up with a waste management company ("Court fines," 2019). While this was just one example in the month of June 2019, which showed action on this discourse of enforcement and punishment, in 2018 and 2019, this had been widespread. The final section in this chapter will outline other cases which the AMA itself has published texts about.

5.4.2 Long-term solutions to Accra's Development - Interviews

All interviewees spoke of the need for more investment, education and enforcement of laws and for changes in attitudes to waste management in Accra. They all pointed to poor health and economic outcomes if these issues were not addressed in the long term. One Old Fadama resident said those who did "bad things" in regard to sanitation should be jailed as a deterrent. The AMA official wanted to see more enforcement to protect the investments the private sector put into waste management, especially in plans to recycle waste. Bylaws had been reviewed since June 3rd with higher penalties as fines and there was a focus on education and enforcement, with sanitation task forces enforcing laws, he added. The pro-poor NGO manager agreed there needed to be more enforcement of sanitation bylaws. He said there had been education activities before enforcement, so there was little excuse for "attitudes" especially those who did not participate in cleanup exercises.

5.6 Local Government Texts

As Chapter Four outlined, this study also used texts put out by the public relations department of the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA). Since 2018 the AMA public relations department have written about the AMA's enforcement of sanitation bylaws and punishment of offenders (prior to July 2018, there are no published texts on the 'news' section of the website). These texts are presented as news articles, often detailing arrests and prosecutions of sanitation offenders in Accra. Some of the five texts include the location of where offenders were arrested which were in poor areas, including informal settlements. Texts detailed arrests for open defecation, urination and indiscriminate dumping. The AMA also often included photos of those arrested and prosecuted on its website, which, along with the AMA-supplied texts, were often reproduced by local media houses.

In one text the AMA said households had to register with the AMA for a toilet facility, and register with accredited solid waste companies warning "if you give your waste to these junkies we will arrest the junky and come after you too" one AMA head was quoted as saying on an AMA post on its official Facebook page (AMA, 2018a). This text was reproduced by news media (Adogla-Bessa, 2018). Articles of arrests include five young men convicted in court for improper disposal of refuse in Accra, none of the five could afford the

fine of GHS600[4] so each were given a six-month prison sentence (AMA, 2018b). Another AMA text brought up that a man was sent to prison due to his inability to pay a GHS360.00[5] fine for improper waste disposal. An AMA spokesperson in the article said the prosecutions were part of efforts by the AMA to clean Accra and came after educating the public and traders to desist from dumping indiscriminately (AMA, 2019).

Between January and May 2019, the AMA reported it had arrested and prosecuted 450 people for sanitation offences (AMA, 2019a). The AMA had sought to work with journalists to change attitudes to make Accra clean, quoting the mayor, the article said the AMA, the state and private institutions had their responsibilities but "more importantly the citizenry" (AMA, 2019b).

These five texts from the AMA also reflected the three themes as outlined above, and show some of the consequences of what elites had advocated for in the aftermath of June 3rd, enforcement of sanitation laws in Accra. However, it did appear Accra's poor were targeted in these operations. These texts also failed to acknowledge why these offences occurred – for example residents not having adequate access to sanitation services.

5.7 Chapter Conclusion

Within the contexts outlined in Chapters One, Two and Three, about the struggles poor residents in particular in Accra have in accessing adequate sanitation services which are basic human rights, this chapter has tracked three key public discourses on how sanitation issues are perceived in Accra. This chapter has shown the heavy weight elites have placed on personal responsibility to sanitation, and how that has especially affected the urban poor, who have been evicted from informal settlements after the disaster, and then in the following years prosecuted for sanitation offences – as was highlighted in the above section on the local government texts. This overall emphasis on responsibly for sanitation in Accra has seen acceptance, attributing and denial of responsibility by authorities. When elites have advocated personal responsibility or blamed the personal practices of citizens, this reflects neoliberal agendas as outlined in Chapters One, Two and Three, where there has been a push

[4] This is equal to about NZD 200.
[5] This is equal to about NZD 105.

to change "perceptions of public and community good to individualism and individual responsibility" (Conway, 2014, p.107).

In making poor people responsible for the state of sanitation in Accra within the articles, there was little analysis or explanations as to why they struggled with sanitation access. As Chapter Four outlined, elites have power in setting media agendas and public discourses, so it was interesting to see the interviews often mirror ideas about personal responsibility and attitudes, with all participants pointing to personal attitudes needing to change in Accra. However, the interviews did tend to include comments on the perceptions of failures from the local and central government, which the newspaper articles and AMA texts did not.

CHAPTER SIX: HOW PUBLIC DISCOURSES ON SANITATION AFFECT THE URBAN POOR IN ACCRA

6.1 Introduction

As a rapidly developing city, with growing inequality, there are key populations in Accra who live in urban poverty, often excluded from public services, such as sanitation. Earlier in this research report, I explained how access to sanitation is a right, which states as duty-bearers are responsible for upholding. Examining public discourses on sanitation issues in Accra and how they affect the urban poor was undertaken because of the importance words hold, especially when they come from elites, who in the context of my research are the duty-bearers. Keeping a rights-lens in mind, I analysed online articles from the national newspaper, the *Daily Graphic* and local government texts, and conducted semi-structured interviews. Three main discourses about how issues of sanitation have been addressed in Accra since the June 3rd disaster, until June 2019 were identified, which addressed research question one, on what public discourses on Accra's sanitation issues have taken place since June 3rd.

The disaster was the starting point for my research because of its significance to Ghana, and how Accra's sanitation issues attributed to it. The literature found the disaster had the biggest effect on the urban poor due to the expenses involved in what was lost (possessions and work) and the health implications (Erman et al., 2018; Songsore, 2017). This effect on the poor was reinforced by my research findings, especially over evictions from informal settlements in the aftermath of the disaster, and then the prosecutions over sanitation offences in following years, which was a recommended outcome from the disaster's commission, and was hinted at by elites in the aftermath (Boadu, 2015b; Government of Ghana, 2015; Yeboah, 2015).

This final chapter will discuss my research findings in light of the literature. This chapter is structured to answer the three research questions that were introduced in Chapter One. First, it focuses on the role of elites in Accra as duty-bearers and their role in forming public

discourses, followed by a section on why discourses matter, and how they affect the urban poor. This chapter then addresses Ghana's progress on the right to sanitation and ends with concluding remarks and recommendations.

6.2 The Position of Elites in Accra

The role of elites has been a large focus because this research is concerned with rights. This section is concerned with outlining the role of elites and the importance of their discourse, in answer to research question one: what public discourses on Accra's sanitation issues have taken place since the flood and fire disaster in June 2015 and two: how public discourses on sanitation described Accra's poor since June 2015.

6.2.1 The Role of Elites as Duty-Bearers

As a democratic nation, authorities in Ghana are either elected or appointed by the elected president to represent the people and put in place policies and laws for the benefit of citizens and to protect human rights. Chapter Two highlighted Ghana's commitments within its constitution and the international community in regards to rights to sanitation. The SDGs outlined emphasise the role of states in realising the right to sanitation and doing so in line with human rights principles. Elites are the duty-bearers when it comes to realising and protecting rights, especially for the most vulnerable in society, and are tasked with improving access to goods and services over time (OHCHR, 1966), and to reduce structural inequality (Chenwi, 2013). Examining the perceptions of Ghanaian elites is important due to the power they hold.

As explained in Chapter Five, some articles challenged authorities and advocated they took responsibility, for example, *Daily Graphic* journalist Obour (2015) wrote about the mayor of Accra's responsibility for the disaster. There were also examples in Chapter Five of authorities taking responsibility, including the AMA demolishing an informal settlement to prevent future disasters (Bokpe, 2015a). However, overall politicians and leaders quoted or written about in the *Daily Graphic* articles tended to avoid taking responsibility. My research found through both the literature review and public discourses a lack of authorities'

accountability over the disaster, and sanitation issues in the following years.

6.2.2 Elites and Rights for the Urban Poor

The literature review in Chapter Two highlighted the importance of rights for the urban poor, and Chapter Three focused on urban poverty issues in Accra including the health and economic consequences of poor sanitation, for example, premature death (World Bank, 2012), and the spread of infectious diseases (Songsore, 2017). As this report has outlined, the urban poor in Accra generally suffer from poor access to sanitation. If urban poverty was addressed in Accra, sanitation would improve. Duty-bearers are responsible for addressing these negative effects of poverty and ensuring sustainable development is in line with human rights principles, which have become the core mandates of development today, especially so in Agenda 2030. As explained in Chapter Three, Ghana has affirmed its commitments to the SDGs. However, SDGs have a commitment to considering targets achieved only if these are met for all segments of a population (Pogge and Sengupta, 2016)**.** The role, especially of local government in waste management in Accra, has been outlined in Chapter Three. As my research has highlighted, elites have at times not been able to uphold these responsibilities for all of Accra. This research has shown the consequences of inadequate access to public services: indiscriminate dumping of refuse, open defecation, and relying on sachet water. These consequences then add to environmental pollution and have further negative costs for the poor. These results reflect the Human Rights Councils' (2018) assessment that a large chunk of the population of Accra does not enjoy their basic economic and social human rights, which calls into doubt Ghana meetings many of the SDGs.

Instead of outlining what authorities are responsible for: to provide to all Accra settlers, including the poor, and their commitments to do so, often the texts from the *Daily Graphic* and the AMA found elites advocated personal or individual responsibility discourses. My research also reflects the legacy neoliberal policies have left since Ghana implemented a SAP in 1983, which largely left the poor out of development and made them responsible for providing their own basic services. In Accra, the poor have to rely on the informal waste collectors, sachet water and public toilets, and local associations, private individuals or non-profits to lay pipes for liquid waste and organise clean-up effort (Danso-Wiredu, 2018; Donkor, 2018; Konadu-Agyemang, 2000; Owusu, 2010; Owusu and Afutu-

Kotey, 2010). When the poor have been unable to access adequate sanitation, for whatever reason, they have been penalised for it (AMA, 2018a; AMA, 2018b; AMA, 2019; AMA, 2019a).

6.2.3 The Influence of Elites on Public Discourses

This research report shows Ghana's government is not fully upholding the right to sanitation. The urban poor especially struggle. While local and central governments authorities have said they want to improve access to sanitation, there is well-documented exclusion of key populations in Accra (Boadi and Kuitunen, 2003; Danso-Wiredu, 2018; Human Rights Council, 2018). As my research found, when the government does create access, it can appear as more a gift being given, not a right being upheld. Findings in my research reflect previous studies on elites' influence in Ghana: Asiedu, Dzokoto, Wallace and Clifford (2013) found elites identified individual agency as the primary cause of both poverty and wealth, while local structural issues were absent in elite discourse. My research suggests through their power and access to the media, elites have pushed a narrative that individuals are responsible for Accra's sanitation issues. This was especially apparent in the articles where current and former presidents spoke out about poor sanitation practices in Accra ("Stop dumping", 2019; Yeboah, 2015; Yeboah, 2019).

In the analysed texts, elites have not directly said the state of sanitation in Accra is the fault of the poor, but this can be inferred through their discourses around those who dump waste illegally. This discourse, viewed within the contexts outlined in Chapter Three on the inadequate access to public services the poor face and the options they are left with, indicates the poor are being held responsible. Residents in informal settlements and poor neighbourhoods were mentioned multiple times in the *Daily Graphic* articles and the AMA texts in their role in contributing to Accra's sanitation issues, and the results of this, including the eviction exercises. Allocating this responsibly to the poor reflects Taylor's (2013) analysis of elites' discourse rationalising and perpetuating social inequalities and excluding a negatively valued group (Taylor, 2013). In this case, the negatively valued group is those in the informal settlements and poor neighbourhoods.

6.3 Why Words Matter

The context about the role of the duty-bearers and their influence in public discourses is important because while there has been some work undertaken in Accra to deal with sanitation issues, the literature, text analysis and interviewees have pointed to some promises, policies and actions, but generally, little accountability. Accountability is one of the principles in RBAs to development, where the state, as duty-bearer, is accountable to the citizens. Instead of accountability, the emphasis has been on advocating others take responsibility for Accra's sanitation issues, as this section will explain. Also within RBAs, understanding the language used and its context of power and knowledge is a way to challenge the dominant ideology.

6.3.1 Blaming the Citizens

Chapter Five showed there were three main discourses in my research (*responsibility, othering,* and *solutions*). a prominent discourse was the avoidance of responsibility, where often included elites advocated citizens take personal responsibility. Rarely did the articles challenge discourses or offer a wider context or acknowledge the right to sanitation people in Accra should have, and the role of government in providing it. Writers were not often critical of the authorities as might be expected after a major disaster, which might be a reflection on the *Daily Graphic* being state-owned, and as Kwansah-Aidoo (2003) wrote, it does have a history of supporting the government of the day.

Journalists reported the poor being evicted from settlements and reported the discourses from elites, who blamed citizens for Accra's sanitation issues while shielding themselves from blame (Arku, 2015; "C'ttee to probe," 2015). In 2015 and 2017 elites spoke of inheriting problems in sanitation and multiple mentions of cleanup efforts in Accra were seen as corporates or communities taking personal responsibility for waste management, or efforts being benevolent acts from the authorities or waste management companies (Agyeman, 2015; Awiah, 2017; Awiah, 2017a; Bentil, 2015; Boadu, 2015; Syme, 2015b). This discourse was despite local and international laws placing sanitation responsibilities on the state, as Chapter Two outlined.

Interviewees focused on the personal responsibility of citizens for sanitation in Accra on one hand while acknowledging the lack of services on the other. One Old Fadama resident supported jail terms for sanitation offences. Still, he said there was often no option in the informal settlement but to illegally dispose of rubbish - the same act that has seen others go to jail for. His discourse indicated he expressed similar sentiments to what the elites had expressed, suggesting elites discourse had entered public ideology, which as Chapter Four outlined can be interpreted as an example of elites' success in using language to influence society and exercise power, including setting agendas (Dunn and Neumann, 2016; Khan, 2012; Taylor, 2013; Thurlow and Jaworski, 2017; Van Dijk,1994). However, he and the other interviewees focused on structural issues and said authorities need to offer more support, especially to those who could not afford or access sanitation services.

6.3.2 The Poor Being Set up to Fail

Over the analysis period of my research, there were few investments into sanitation in poor neighbourhoods and informal settlements in Accra by local or central government. The literature, interviews and articles pointed to residents being left to deal with sanitation and other urban development issues themselves, and when they did so through illegal means (such as indiscriminate disposal of waste), individuals were targeted by authorities and prosecuted - individualising the problem.

The 'othering' discourse in Chapter Five indicated the poor people are aware of the role the government is meant to play. The Old Fadama interviewees pointed to the AMA being responsible for sanitation, and the government needing to do more. In the articles, after June 3rd, evicted residents from the informal settlement protested and fought back against authorities, saying evictions were "a blatant attempt to evacuate them from the capital" ("Old Fadama," 2015) and they would not vote for the government. While this protest action ended in arrests, with suitable support, it could propel others to take their fight to court to demand their right to space and public services – including sanitation. A defining principle and process of development within RBAs is confronting power structures and expanding democratic spaces and processes (Gready, 2008), this protest can be seen as a reflection of this.

The othering discourse also reflected Accra's urban divide and how this divide can result in social and political tensions (UN-HABITAT, 2010). As outlined in Chapter Three, those who live in Old Fadama are mostly from Ghana's north, and as a group, might experience negative stereotyping (Akansake, 2013; Lawson, Akotia, and Asumeng, 2015; Nuhu, 2003). Articles have described the urban poor, especially those from Old Fadama negatively ("AMA will," 2015; "Old Fadama," 2015). Within the texts the AMA put out about sanitation actions, there was also othering of the poor, especially in the Facebook post, which called informal collectors "junkies" (AMA, 2018a). As this report has shown, there are significant proportions of the population in Accra living in urban poverty, relying on daily wages and precarious informal sector work and services. As Chapters One and Three outlined inequality is on the rise and poverty is still prevalent in many areas (Cooke, Hague, and McKay, 2016). About 20% of the population is living in poverty and one in 8 is living in extreme poverty (Human Rights Council, 2018, p.5). It is likely those who were given prison sentences because they could not pay for the sanitation fines, as described in the AMA texts, were living in urban poverty. As outlined in Ghana's Environmental Sanitation Policy, environmental sanitation is a shared responsibility between the local and central government, the private sector and individuals (Government of Ghana, 2010). However, advocating poor people take responsibility for the state of sanitation in Accra when the state or the private sector cannot provide them with adequate and safe access has not fixed issues, rather it is likely to further impoverish the poor.

There have also been contradictions from within the AMA over its relationship with the informal collectors; for example, the AMA interviewee said while they used to see these collectors as a nuisance, they now saw their importance in helping to clean up Accra, whereas, on the AMA website, a director said people who use them would be penalised by the AMA (AMA, 2018a). This reflects a basis of qualitative research, which acknowledges there are multiple versions of reality (Taylor, 2013). However, regardless of the way elites spoke about responsibility for sanitation, a strong underlying theme was to blame citizens.

6.4 Accra's Progress on the Right to Sanitation

Despite the discourse on blaming poor people and the slow progress on the right to sanitation in Accra, in recent years there have been some promises and actions the government made especially working towards the SDGs, including to reduce its slums by at least 10% by 2063, which is linked to target 11.1 (upgrading slums) (National Development Planning Commission, 2018, p.71), the setting up of Ghana's first Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources in 2017 and the President's pledge to make Accra the cleanest city in Africa are reflective of targets in SDGs 3, 6, 10 and 11 as were outlined in Chapter Two. Ghana has presented itself as taking its commitments to the SDGs seriously and outlined the importance of reaching the targets for the development of the nation. There have been some interesting developments in the past few years, that seem to take a more sustainable approach to sanitation in Accra: in 2019, the government introduced a plastics management policy, making it the first in Africa to join the Global Plastic Action Partnership (GPAP), a public-private platform focused on tackling plastic pollution, especially in creating a circular plastics economy and accelerating progress towards SDGs (Wahlen, 2019). In late 2019, the mayor of Accra said there were plans to upgrade Old Fadama, including to improve sanitation and prevent flooding, with a promise of refuse containers in the community (AMA, 2019d). However, as one Old Fadama resident in the community said, often politicians made promises to residents, but did not see these implemented. Some pledges have come to fruition, like enforcing sanitation bylaws and prosecuting offenders. However, this enforcement appears to further burden Accra's poor. Further, eviction exercises targeting both informal settlements have little lasting effect - since the June 2015 evictions of Old Fadama, people have moved back, as at 2018, it was estimated 100,000 people lived there. As Crentsil and Owusu (2018) argue, these actions are often an attempt to hide the inefficiencies of the city authorities, and poor planning and governance over the years, when Accra needs lasting solutions to its sanitation issues, which are a consequence of urban poverty.

In the past year, Accra has introduced public waste bins along popular routes in the city, which appears effective in the areas they are located (personal observation). The bins have been placed at popular streets, and the assemblies are tasked with monitoring them (Abugri, 2019). As the President said, there have been efforts to clean up the central business district

and what the government refers to as ceremonial routes (Yeboah, 2017). However, as all Old Fadama residents explained in the interviews, there is little on the ground in poor communities like theirs. Drains are still clogged through the city (even in some of the wealthy areas). Since June 3rd, more people have drowned in Accra in rainy season flooding (Yeboah, 2019; Yusif, 2018).

Accra still has a long way to go to achieve the SDGs related to sanitation and urban development. The SDGs outlined in this report are interlinked, and are especially relevant to urban poverty. Accra's sanitation issues are a reflection of its urban poverty issues. SDG 3 on healthy lives and well-being for all will not be achieved especially if people continue to die due to preventable deaths, like from malaria and water-borne diseases which are linked to poor sanitation. With only ten years to achieve SDG 6 – Sanitation for All, the pressure is on Ghana to ensure sustainable, adequate and equitable sanitation, water and hygiene access for all, including an end to open defecation, and to reduce dumping and pollution of water bodies. While there have been some commitments, as outlined through this report, poor access to sanitation is a reflection of urban poverty and inequality, and the sector is underfunded with large sections of the population excluded from access (Human Rights Council, 2018; Owusu, 2010). Excluding residents from services will also impact Ghana meeting SDG 10 on reducing inequalities.

As this report has outlined, inequality has been on the rise in Ghana (Cooke, Hague, and McKay, 2016). In Accra, inequality is reflected in sanitation services, for example comparing an average of 23.2% of homes with toilets in three poor urban communities in Accra to homes in Accra's high-class residential areas where over 80% of households had in-house toilets (Owusu and Afutu-Kotey, 2010, p.5-6). Poor access to sanitation further burdens the poor in health and economic outcomes (World Bank, 2012; WHO, 2014). Finally, SDG 11 on inclusive cities shows the need to address Accra's growing urban divide, especially in ensuring those in the informal settlements have access to "adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums" (United Nations, 2015).

As Chapter Two outlined, there are many obstacles to overcome in achieving these SDGs, including corruption in service provision and contracts (Coleman, 2018; "Govt cancels," 2019; Hirvi and Whitfield, 2015). As well as defined support and commitments needed from rich countries to help nations like Ghana realise these rights (Pogge and Senguta, 2016). Finally, as this research has shown, there is little acknowledgment by authorities in Accra

over the right to sanitation. The final section of this chapter will offer recommendations on how Ghana might achieve these SDGs.

6.5 Conclusion and Recommendations

To create sustainable solutions to Accra's sanitation issues, the results presented in this research report suggest a better focus on the multidimensional urban poverty issues in Accra, including upgrading informal settlements. Accra needs to focus on its sanitation in a sustainable way, ensuring and respecting human rights for all, with large investments in both service provision and maintenance of systems while users need education on what sustainable sanitation is and the benefits of it, and participate in creating solutions, which could lead to greater awareness and value of the importance of it (Andersson, Dickin and Rosemarin, 2016). Cibrario (2016) argued ownership of these basic services (sanitation and waste management) is important for their success - they are essential public services, so should be owned by the public, accessible to all and democratically accountable to local communities. However, as Pogge and Senguta (2016) outlined specific responsibilities need to be placed on wealthy nations to assist nations like Ghana to realise rights, which would be in line with Agenda 2030's commitment to realise the right to development. There is an irony that the World Bank is now loaning Accra funding to increase the urban poor's access to sanitation services when it was SAPs that are attributed to the city's current issues.

Also in line with RBAs, the urban poor need to be empowered to advocate for rights through court systems. Barriers to empowerment need to be addressed, including having to rely on civil society to advocate for them. The actions of Old Fadama residents protesting in the aftermath of the June 3rd disaster and their evictions shows residents are willing to fight for their rights. With suitable support, this resistance energy could be channelled into the legal realm.

Accra has seen some positive actions since the June 3rd disaster, including checks on fuel stations, dredged water bodies, increased toilet access and some of Accra's drainage systems have been fixed, but sanitation issues are still a major factor in Accra. Drains are still often clogged with refuse through the city, especially the lower-socio economic areas. More

investment in the sanitation sector is needed, and the state needs to see access to sanitation as a human right - and advocate for this right.

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Appendix 1:

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
TE KURA PŪKENGA TANGATA

Public discourses on sanitation and the urban poor in Accra, Ghana

June third, 2019.

Warmest greetings to you.

My name is Stacey Knott. I am from New Zealand. I am undertaking my Master's in International Development through Massey University which is based in New Zealand. I am currently working on my research report as part of this qualification. I have been living in Ghana since 2015 working as a journalist. However, this project will be solely approached from an academic view and not used for any journalist related purposes.

My research project is based on sanitation issues in Accra especially around access for the urban poor. This research project has at a starting point of the flood and fire disaster in Accra in 2015, which killed about 150 people. The state of sanitation played a large role in causing this disaster. I will look at how sanitation has been discussed in the media, government documents and through interviews by using a discourse analysis method. I am interested in whether and how the right to sanitation has been implemented in Ghana and how sanitation issues are related to Ghana's development.

I would love to have your input in this project and am formally inviting you to take part by granting me a semi-structured interview.

This is a small research project (not a full thesis) so I am only doing a handful of interviews. I am interested in the Accra Metropolitan Assembly views and would like to invite you to a conversation about sanitation in Accra.

Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa

School of People, Environment & Planning
Private Bag 11222, Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand. **T** +64 6 350 4343 **F** +64 6 350 5737. **http://pep.massey.ac.nz**

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AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
TE KURA PŪKENGA TANGATA

If you agree to an interview it will take about an hour and be at the time and place of your convenience. Your information will only be used for the purposes of completing my Master's degree. You will be able to decide how you wish to be referred to in the report, I will not need to use your name or job title unless you prefer I do (for example you could be listed as an 'an official from the Accra Metropolitan Assembly'). I am also happy to share with you a copy of my research report once it has gone through the examination process in 2020. If so, on the consent sheet I will request you give me your contact email or however you wish to receive the report.

If you agree to an interview with me, which will take approximately one hour, then you have the right to *decline to answer any particular question; withdraw from the study before September 1; ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;*

provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher; be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded and ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.

Thank you very much! If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me or my supervisor. Contact details are below.

Researcher: Stacey Knott, 0277175562 (Ghana phone number) stacey.knott@gmail.com.

Supervisor: Dr Maria Borovnik, Senior Lecturer in Development Studies, School of People, Environment and Planning, Massey University, Private Bag 11222, Palmerston North, New Zealand. Phone: 0064 6 356 9099 ext 83643 (New Zealand number); Email: M.Borovnik@massey.ac.nz

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Prof Craig Johnson, Director, Research Ethics, telephone 06 356 9099 x 85271, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz".

Appendix 2:

Public discourses on sanitation and the urban poor in Accra, Ghana

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.

I would like to be referred to in this study in the following way (fill in your preference):

- My name and title i.e. ……
    - (e.g. John Baidoo, Public Relations, Waste Management Accra, Ghana)

- My title or a descriptor i.e. ……
    - (e.g. Spokesperson of a waste company, Ghana)

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

I would/would not like a summary report of the findings sent to me on completion of this research.

Signature: ..... **Date:** .....

Full Name – printed .....

Email address: .....

Appendix 3:

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
TE KURA PŪKENGA TANGATA

Public discourses on sanitation and the urban poor in Accra, Ghana

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

I ..... (Full Name - printed) agree to keep confidential all information concerning the project on Public discourses on sanitation and the urban poor in Accra, Ghana

I will not retain, disclose or copy any information involving the project, including the interview I am translating.

Signature: ..... **Date:** .....

Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa

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Public discourses on sanitation and the urban poor in Accra, Ghana

Knott, Stacey

2020